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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE ART OF FAILURE IN CARMEN 64:
NULLA DOMUS, NULLUS AMOR IN CATULLUS

BY

MARGARET MARINA DRUMMOND

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

IN

CLASSICAL LITERATURE

DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICS

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL, 1990

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Rosemary M. Nielsen, Supervisor

Helena Fracchia

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Date: September 25, 1990

DEDICATION

To the memory of my parents, and to

all my beautiful children.

Abstract

The thesis approaches *Carmen* 64 as a painting in words. The painting consists of a central canvas, an *ekphrasis*, which depicts the Ariadne/Theseus love story and four framing edges. The edges contain *picturae* of the world before the marriage of Peleus and Thetis; the separate worlds of the wedding guests; the world of Achilles, the killer-hero, and the world of the *caelicolae*.

Although scholars see the lop-sidedness of the poem's structure, there is general agreement that Catullus celebrates the blissful union of Peleus and Thetis and the nobility of the lost heroic age of their son. But the strategy of painting in words allows Catullus' invisible narrator to bring out, *pictura* by *pictura*, the flaws and the half-truths of believing in such a Golden Age. The narrator dominates. He seduces the reader into a series of realms (natural, human, and divine), where nothing is what it first appears to be. The fourth framing edge serves as an *epitaphium* recording all of the grim realities of the epyllion. Gods are seen deserting mankind; men and women engage in perversions of the *amor* which brought Ariadne and Theseus together; and mankind forgets its duties, just as Theseus forgets the *mandata* of a dear parent. Separation, abandonment, entropy, and failure haunt every image of the poem.

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CHAPTER ONE

"THE SAFER TERRITORY OF THE TEXT"

> Favorable criticism devoted to the longer poems of Catullus is still comparatively rare.
>
> M. C. J. Putnam

This thesis approaches *Carmen* 64 as a *lusus naturae*.[1] In its literal meaning, the phrase is appropriate to a poem in which Catullus' narrator plays self-conscious "games," not only with a variety of "natural settings," but also with his own powers of control as a craftsman of literary art. Without warning, he breaks his narrative apart at lines 115-116, and challenges the reader to answer the following question: "Why have I digressed from my central theme?" This "sporting" with the question of poetic structures and epic convention leads into the metaphorical application of *lusus naturae* to Catullus' epyllion. As an odd assortment of large and small *tableaux vivants* loosely interconnected, Catullus' epyllion "deviates" both from the "normal type" of poem in his own collection, and from what is conjectured about the genre of the Hellenistic epyllion.[2] As such, then, the poem stands out as an uncharted territory which has tantalized a host of scholars over the last century and a half.

Two major territories of scholarship have been opened up, almost in a neat chronological sequence; the philological and the autobiographical. Ellis (1876) should be considered as the "father" of English philological

criticism on Catullus. Building upon the work done by the great nineteenth-century German scholars on the reconstruction of the Catullan text, Ellis argues for a "scientific" scrutiny of the language and allusions of c. 64. Unlike the later commentators who follow his lead, Ellis never reduces the poetry to a scholarly game played for reputation and position in the field.[3] Ellis' work is based on the conception of Catullus as the first of the two poets (the other being Virgil) who "respectively represent the highest point of Roman imagination in the Ciceronian and Augustan age."[4]

The greatest sign of Ellis' ability to see the horizon of the poem beyond the limits of his chosen philological territory is his perception of the importance, to the meaning of the poem, of its puzzling asymmetrical structure. In a comment typifying his general method, Ellis weighs, with tact and sensibility, the value of the novel thematic approach taken by a contemporary critic (Shadworth Hodgson). Without entirely dismissing the ability of Hodgson's theme of "the glory of marriage"[5] to unite the poem, Ellis hints at the complexity of c. 64, and unwittingly sets forth the critical perspective that has dominated all subsequent work on the poem. For Ellis, c. 64 exhibits a "defect," namely, a "want of poetical finish in the junctures."[6]

This "want of finish," a defect quickly restated as the lack of fusion between the "marriage" stories of Peleus/Thetis and Theseus/Ariadne, has sent English, German, and American scholars on a journey into the territory of Archaic Greek and Hellenistic Greek poetic tradition. Wheeler (1934) summarizes the "vexed problem of sources"[7] in the poem by pointing now to a lost Hesiodic *exemplum*, now to Euphorion (c.

200 B.C.), now to a Callimachean *epithalamium*, and, finally, to lost Roman sources, such as Cinna's *Zmyrna*. Following Wheeler, Fordyce (1961) moves beyond an archaeology of sources to connect Catullus' "mannerist"[8] style in c. 64 to the influence upon him of common Hellenistic literary devices (e.g. "exclamation," "apostrophe," "realistic description," "sentimental analysis of emotion").[9] Clausen (1970), examining Catullus' struggle to adapt Callimachean diction and style to Latin measures (cc. 65 and 66), acknowledges that the Roman poet "improves on the original" in a few places.[10] Whether intentionally or not, the effect of searching for sources has been to deny Catullus his originality and creative impulse. Accordingly, if c. 64 has any defect, it is because the *poeta* was too *doctus*, too scholarly a translator of sources.

Putnam (1961) sets the standard for the autobiographical approach to c. 64. He rejects the view of the poem as a "made-to-order Alexandrian work,"[11] and turns critical attention to another method of interpretation. Putnam believes in identifying the historical poet Catullus with the female *dramatis persona* of the epyllion, Ariadne. Establishing a widely-adhered-to tenet of faith about Catullus, Putnam argues that the Roman poet "could never divorce himself from his themes."[12] Assertions such as, for example, that Catullus uses his art to "show his whole life as if seen in a mirror,"[13] flow naturally from Daniels' (1967) linkage between the themes of c. 64 and the "Lesbia-cycle."[14] The dominant theme unifying these sets of poems, according to Daniels and later Adler (1982), is that of the betrayal of love. With the figure of Ariadne, therefore, we are to see the real Catullus exploring his "feminine" side. This is a dimension of "self" which, according to Adler, allows him to recover from

the psychological blows inflicted by Lesbia, and to project an image of his own better values and emotional sensitivity as the "woman" in the text.[15] But this approach violates the rightful boundaries delimiting one poetic world from another, and the life of the poet from his art. With the autobiographical method, c. 64 has become a "safe territory," a hypothetical one from which to speculate about Catullus' personal sexuality and about the chronological ordering in which he wrote his self-revelatory excerpts, as if in a kind of poetic diary. There is no real interest in explaining the structure of c. 64, because the real function of this poem is to play its part in unifying the Catullan corpus.

As this brief summary of the scholarship of c. 64 has indicated, the central question has always been: What kind of art has Catullus created? Over the past century, there have been hints of an answer -- or, rather of a new perspective that might explain the problem of the poem's structure. Wheeler, for example, notes in passing that c. 64 owes more to "sculpture or painting [than to] literature."[16] More recently, Kinsey (1965), digressing from his study of the ironic features of the epyllion, compares the delineation of what he calls "the main theme" (the Peleus/Thetis marriage story) to "a series of scenes on a work of art."[17] This thesis proposes to examine c. 64 as Catullus' experiment in combining the artistic techniques of the verbal and the visual. The poem is envisioned as a kind of papyrus/canvas on which Catullus juxtaposes and, at times, even superimposes, fragmented visions of doomed human existence.

Chapter Two develops an original approach by viewing the Ariadne/Theseus story as both the physical and the symbolic center of a poem, the inspiration of which is a radical revision of the heroic world

and its values. Lines 50-264 are treated as the painting or the canvas of the poetic text. The chapter examines how the narrator uses words and images, like brush strokes and color, to cast the mythological figures of the golden-age hero and his noble helpmate, the heroine, into a new, darker hue. Chapter Three argues that the rest of the epyllion forms the framing motifs that edge the papyrus/canvas. The first three of these corners are discussed as a unit, and include: (1) lines 1-49 (the world before the marriage of Peleus and Thetis); (2) lines 265-302 (the separate worlds of the wedding guests; and (3) lines 303-383 (the world of the killer-hero Achilles, as created by his prophet-singers, the Parcae).

Chapter Four approaches the fourth edge of the frame, lines 384-408 (the inner world of the narrator), as a parting look back at the canvas/papyrus as a whole. This frame catalogues, or etches in, details of a divine world where god and man, martial deity and hero, never cohere. *Carmen* 64 does not trace the fall of mankind from some lost and desirable golden epic existence. Rather, it peels away the veneer of myths and cultural expectations about man's *aristeia*, and it rings with the narrator's despair over the possibility of lasting, mutually beneficial relationships between gods, men and women, and nature.

NOTES

1. All the definitions of this term used in this paragraph are taken from *OED* 2, Volume IX (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 123. The title of this chapter is a quote taken from T. P. Wiseman, *Catullus & His World. A Reappraisal* (Cambridge: University Press, 1985), p. 179, hereafter cited as Wiseman, *Catullus' World*.

2. For a brief summary, see J. Fordyce, *Catullus. A Commentary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), pp. 272-273.

3. A typical example of this kind of exchange is to be found in the following: T. P. Wiseman, "Catullus' Iacchus and Ariadne," *LCM* 2 (1977), pp. 177-180, herafter cited as Wiseman, "Catullus' Iacchus," and G. Giangrande, "Catullus 64." Giangrande begins one of his sentences with the following words: "I have destroyed the only argument used by the critics...."

4. R. Ellis, *A Commentary on Catullus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, reprint 1889), in his *Prolegomena*, p. XXII.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 280-281.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 281.

7. A. L. Wheeler, *Catullus and the Traditions of Ancient Poetry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, reprint 1964), p. 148.

8. K. Quinn, *Catullus. An Interpretation* (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1972), p. 262, suggests the effect of Catullus' "mannerism" this way: "[The] lines...seem to stride confidently forward, one by one, each pausing for our applause before giving place to the next." This work is hereafter cited as Quinn, *Interpretation*.

9. Fordyce, pp. 274-275.

10. W. Clausen, "Catullus and Callimachus," *HSCP* 74 (1970), p. 88. T. Frank, *Catullus and Horace. Two Poets in Their Environment* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1928), p. 103, says: "However, Catullus was himself as creative as any of the Alexandrians and a *truer* poet (italics mine). See also L. W. Daly, "Callimachus and Catullus," *CP* 47 (1952), pp. 97-98.

11. M. C. J. Putnam, "The Art of Catullus 64," in *Approaches to Catullus*, ed. K. Quinn (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1972), p. 225.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 166.

13. Paul Veyne, *Roman Erotic Elegy. Love, Poetry and the West*, trans. David Pellauer (Chicago: University Press, 1988), p. 171.

14. M. L. Daniels, "Personal Revelation in Catullus 64," *CJ* 62 (1967), pp. 351-356. J. Ferguson, *Catullus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 35, finds "allusions to Lesbia poems," and deems the references "hardly...accidental."

15. E. Adler, *Catullan Self-Revelation* (New York: Arno Press, 1981), pp. 145ff.

16. Wheeler, p. 149.

17. T. E. Kinsey, "Irony and Structure in Catullus 64," *Latomus* 24 (1965), p. 929.

CHAPTER TWO

ARIADNE AND THESEUS: *UT PICTURA POESIS*

Paint me a cavernous waste shore
Cast in the unstilled Cyclades,
Paint me the bold anfractuous rocks
Faced by the snarled and yelping seas.

Display me Aeolus above
Reviewing the insurgent gales
Which tangle Ariadne's hair
And swell with haste the perjured sails.

T. S. Eliot, "Sweeney Erect"

Sweeney (or is it the poet-narrator?) dreams.[1] The male conjures up a mythological seascape utterly remote from the tawdry day-to-day reality of *l'homme moyen sensuel*. The woman in the dream *tableau*, with her wind-blown hair, is lovely; a disembodied figure, quite unlike Sweeney's own too-real Doris of the "broad feet." Sweeney can, for a moment, fantasize about himself as the heroic lover, and also as a man who sails away at will from his imaginary woman. Whether or not Eliot had *Carmen* 64 in mind as he composed, the naming of his archetypical woman as "Ariadne," and the creation of her image as a vague pictorial creation, an *emblema* of a world in which human relationships are illusory, is reminiscent of the ancient Latin poem. Catullus' poet-narrator also conjures up a vision of the love-relationship between Ariadne and her Theseus; it, too, becomes symbolic of all the broken dreams of its creator.

Both Eliot and Catullus play with poetry as a painting in words, tonality, and the positioning of themes and characters. With self-

conscious display, Eliot reiterates his command, "paint me," while ensuring at the same time that the vocabulary selected for his legendary scene depicts no still life (cf. "unstilled Cyclades"). Similarly, in lines 50-51, Catullus' narrator displays his powers of visual art (51, *mira arte*) in a way that highlights the poet in the text and his problem of control over his medium. He treats the "bedspread" (50, *vestis*) as a tapestry on which there is painted a series of shifting *figurae* ("shapes" or "forms"),[2] "arranged" in well-contrived variation (50, *variata*),[3] and brought to life by the narrator's "psychologically intriguing"[4] perspective on each of his creations. Lines 50-266 form what Leach in her study of Ovid calls an "*ekphrasis*," both a "bravura piece" and a "poetic description of a work of art."[5] But the difference between Ovid and Catullus is that, for the latter poet, the *ekphrasis* is no mere rhetorical device used to connect, however haphazardly, an "eclectic combination of tales."[6] In c. 64, the *ekphrasis* first casts the reader in the role of viewer and critic of a word-canvas. Nevertheless, as the images pile up, the reader finds himself seduced by, and absorbed into the world of the narrator's imagination, a realm where nothing is what it first appears to be.

Catullus' narrator plays, much as the American poet Emily Dickinson does, with the artist figure as one who is empowered to tell "all the Truth but tell it slant."[7] By superimposing the Ariadne-Theseus painting upon the larger canvas of a heroic narrative, the narrator draws out a possible pun in *ekphrasis* as a "telling over" (cf. the verb *ekphradzo*).[8] In effect, c. 64 is a palimpsest, erasing the conventional literary and cultural truths of the heroic world. Thus, a poem which has always

appeared to critics as flawed, accidentally lop-sided or de-centered, is deliberately so. The whole conception of the project pushes the reader to envision "deeper, less accessible (and less socially acceptable) levels of meaning."[9]

The present chapter divides the central story of the epyllion into two separate readings: (1) Ariadne's love, (50-75; 86-104; 116-202), and (2) Theseus' quest (75-85 and 104-115; 202-248). This division is caused by a narrator, who pulls himself up short in lines 116-117 in order to question his own technique; the participle *digressus* (116) calls attention to his shaping of a hybrid poetry out of the ancient epic. With the pronoun *ego* (116), and the verb *commemorem* (117), the narrator becomes a character in his own text, a *figura* who as a poet has as much at stake in terms of future renown as his two *figurae*, Ariadne and Theseus. But at the heart of this central story, everything is split apart. The narrator conceives of Ariadne and Theseus as lovers irrevocably alienated from one another. In the following re-reading it becomes clear that although the suffering Ariadne seems to dominate the canvas, the *figura* of Theseus as the fugitive hero in the background evokes more of the reader's sympathy. The painting is at odds with the words: a daring *ekphrasis*.

I. ARIADNE

Most critics, like Arkins recently, approach the initial representation of Ariadne in lines 50-75 as full of pathos. In this view, it is Catullus' sensitive "portrayal of the heroine standing amid seaweed...while the waves play with her discarded clothes."[10] The vision

of the abandoned Ariadne has aroused critics to suffer along with her; that is, to rewrite a romantic version of "her betrayal from something that is both desire and anger."[11] No one can deny that the Ariadne of the Latin poem is abandoned and, as Adler notes, "stripped of everything."[12] What is important, however, is the way in which she is stripped as love-heroine. Lines 52-54 are the key to Ariadne's existence in the painting:[13]

> *namque fluentisono prospectans litore Diae,*
> *Thesea cedentem celeri cum classe tuetur*
> *indomitos in corde gerens Ariadna furores,*
>
> (For, looking forth from the sounding shore of Dia, Ariadne, harboring untamed madness in her heart, gazes at Theseus departing in his swift craft.)

Although the words *prospectans* (52), *tuetur* (53), and *gerens* (54) cast Ariadne as the active agent of her own story, as well as the subject of the narrator's, the positioning of the names "Theseus" and "Ariadne" tell a different story. Because the nominative participle *prospectans* has no referent in line 52, the reader looks to the Greek accusative noun *Thesea* for the first signs of human life on the *vestis*. The nouns *Thesea* and *Ariadna* resemble one another in number of syllables and end-rhyme, but the male is given the dominant first position *vis-à-vis* the woman on the papyrus/canvas. The narrator sketches him in as already having made a crucial decision with respect to Ariadne's destiny: Theseus rejects the woman. The accusative participle *cedentem* passes no judgment against the "departing" hero; in terms of first impression, Theseus is merely a flee(t)ing image, something in the act of being "gazed upon" (*prospectans*).

By contrast, the gazer, Ariadne, can only re-act to what is happening. Her name, although in the nominative, is enclosed in line 54

by the single greatest attribute of the feminine condition, as it is portrayed on the narrator's canvas. To be seen as "Ariadne" means to be identified with madness. Ariadne is the prey of not only *furor*, but of multiple forms of irrationality. By placing the noun Ariadne in end-position next to *furores*, the narrator turns the woman into an abstract embodiment of ungovernable feelings. This metamorphosis of the narrator's heroine is the first step of her eventual reincarnation, in lines 60-70, as the *saxea effigies...bacchantis* (61):

> *quem procul ex alga maestis Minois ocellis,*
> *saxea ut effigies bacchantis, prospicit, eheu,*
> *prospicit et magnis curarum fluctuat undis,*
> *non flavo retinens subtilem vertice mitram,*
> *non contecta levi velatum pectus amictu,*
> *non tereti strophio lactentis vincta papillas,*
> *omnia quae toto delapsa e corpore passim*
> *ipsius ante pedes fluctus salis alludebant.*
> *sed neque tum mitrae neque tum fluitantis amictus*
> *illa vicem curans toto ex te pectore, Theseu,*
> *toto animo, tota pendebat perdita mente.*
>
> (From far off among the seaweed, the daughter of Minos gazes at him with sad eyes, just like the stone effigy of a bacchante; she gazes, alas, and is tossed by great waves of sorrow -- not keeping her finely-woven scarf on her head; her breasts not veiled by her light garment; her milky nipples not held by a smooth band. The salt waves were toying with all these clothes, which had slipped from her body in front of her. But then, caring neither for her head-dress nor her floating garments, she was hanging on you, Theseus, her mind lost, with all her heart, with all her soul.)

The startling image of a woman as "stone semblance of a bacchante" ensures that the Ariadne of lines 50-75 will always remain at odds with herself, that is, unable to express a "self" which is whole, integrated, her own. For the reader, the allusion in *bacchantis* back to Euripides' *Bacchae* makes Ariadne a particularly complex and frightening *figura* to view. Tension has been created between Ariadne as still-life on the exterior, and as seething movement and passion on the interior. In

addition, Ariadne is no longer a woman in a painting; now she is a stone sculpture: the artistic medium has shifted in appearance. Like the epyllion itself, the woman in it is a peculiar hybrid -- stone only partly painted, a deliberate effect.

At first impresssion, the narrator tempts the reader to look at his female stone effigy erotically. Eyes are drawn down over the physical details of what should be a seductive statue of a woman's body. The reader sees a headband loosened from blonde locks (63); breasts left unveiled (64); milky nipples (65); and, finally, clothing spread at random in the sea-water (66-67). But these painted images are the only indications of life on the statue; the rest of Ariadne does not exist. The narrator's Ariadne has no lips or face to invite the reader, no hands to hold out to him, no thighs or legs to give the promise of a night of pleasure.[14] In fact, this undraped nude lacks the trunk of a solid body. She is bits and pieces, fragments of a woman.

The narrator not only presents Ariadne as a woman undressed, but also allows the reader to participate vicariously in the experience of undressing Ariadne himself. The realization of what has just happened in looking over the stone effigy shocks the alert reader. He steps back from the statue, trying to see it from another perspective. Has the narrator's game of molding his *figura* of Ariadne been misogynistic, or is there something underlying and more important here?

Perhaps the answer to these questions lies in the narrator's own intrusion into the text at this point. In an elaborate apostrophe, lines 71-75, he addresses Ariadne as "*misera*" (71), an epithet normally used of the male lover elsewhere in Catullus. In poems such as 8 and 51, *miser*

heralds a sympathetic approach to the emotions and tribulations of men in love. In c. 64, however, the narrator, having shown no love of the female body, does not try to evoke a feeling of sympathy for the woman struggling with her love inside the effigy. Rather, he "paints" Ariadne's love onto her body, a detail added through the allusion to the "spiky love-thorns" (72, *spinosas...curas*) that she must wear. These thorns are as ornate and out-of-place as the Hellenistic title *Erycina* by which Venus appears in -- and just as suddenly disappears from -- the scene. Incongruous details, such as a love that is no love, a love goddess who has no positive function, a woman who is neither a real woman nor a maenad, create a poetic world in which everything is emptiness, sham. Ariadne is the *emblema* of all of the realms that will be delineated in c. 64. This female *figura* is a paradox, at once both physical stone effigy and immaterial abstract idea. In whichever form she is viewed in lines 50-75, Ariadne's existence is circumscribed by the names *Thesea* and *Theseus*.

In lines 86-104 the narrator moves backwards in time, from the image of Ariadne abandoned to that of Ariadne in the bosom of a loving family:[15]

hunc simul as cupido conspexit lumine virgo
regia, quam suavis expirans castus odores
lectulus in molli complexu matris alebat,
quales Eurotae progignunt flumina myrtus
aurave distinctos educit verna colores,
non prius ex illo flagrantia declinavit
lumina, quam cuncto concepit corpore flammam
funditus atque imis exarsit tota medullis.
heu misere exagitans immiti corde furores
sancte puer, curis hominum qui gaudia misces,
quaeque regis Golgos quaeque Idalium frondosum,
qualibus incensam iactastis mente puellam
fluctibus, in flavo saepe hospite suspirantem!
quantos illa tulit languenti corde timores!
quanto saepe magis fulgore expalluit auri,
cum saevum cupiens contra contendere monstrum

aut mortem appeteret Theseus aut praemia laudis!
non ingrata tamen frustra munuscula divis
promittens tacito succepit vota labello.

(As soon as the royal virgin caught sight of him -- she whom her little bed indulged in the soft embrace of a mother -- just so the rivers of Eurota give birth to myrtles, or the breeze brings forth distinct hues in spring; it was not before she turned her burning eyes from him that she conceived a flame within her entire body, and all of her burned in the depths of her being. Alas, you who inflict madness on our poor hearts, savage holy child, you who mix the joys of mankind with sorrows, and you who rule Golgos and leafy Idalium, in what floods you tossed the mind of the girl, ever sighing over the golden-haired stranger! What fear she bore in her languishing heart! How often she grew paler than the gleam of gold, when Theseus, desiring to contend against the cruel monster, would seek out death or the reward of praise! Nervertheless, it was not in vain that, promising not unpleasing little gifts to the gods, she made her vows with silent lips.)

Everything in this *tableau* is filled with the same kind of incongruous details that characterized Ariadne as stone effigy. There is a strange juxtaposition of conflicting images and hyperbolic language; textures, scent and color, and fires are all jumbled together and give this brief scene a surrealistic effect. Forsyth and other commentators take the scene literally, and read into details such as the "little bed" (88, *lectulus*) evidence of Ariadne's essential vulnerability and sexual purity.[16] Harmon, however, sees the possibility of a certain wantonness in Ariadne:[17]

> For a daughter of Pasiphae, to be in full blossom means to arrive at the time of life when powerful and ungovernable passions first appear.

The narrator's concern, however, is not with condemning Ariadne through her maternal lineage but, rather, with suggesting her responsibility for the sexual liaison between Ariadne and Theseus. In two ornate, alliterative phrases -- "*hunc simul ac cupido conspexit* lumine virgo"

(86), and *"quam cuncto concepit corpore flammam,"* (92) -- Ariadne is reduced to "lustful eyes" (86, *cupido...lumina*, and 91-92, *flagrantia...lumina*). Her obsession with desire is made explicit in the hyperbolic language describing the flames that "eat away the marrow of her bones"(93). This lovesick *figura* is the same woman who, by metonymy (86 ff.), is also described as *"virgo,"* the possessor of a "chaste little bed" (87-88).

The alert reader struggles with the inherent contradictions in the painting? sculpture? abstract idea? of Ariadne. He, too, is in a state of "desire," longing to hold on to his initial image of the *virgo regia* as a young princess sheltered and surrounded by the pleasures of family and the beauties of nature. But the simile (87-90) which portrays her bedroom as a springtime bower, verdant and filled with scent, is not sufficient to remove the reader's uneasiness over where the chastity lies. For the *lectulus*, not Ariadne, "breathes out the perfumes of maidenhood" (87). Thus the reader's physical senses take him one way; his critical sense takes him the other way.

And the narrator provides no room for reflection on this problem. In lines 94-102 he again intervenes by becoming a speaking character who talks to the reader (not to Ariadne) about the meaning of the *tableau*. The reader now learns that both his senses and his intellect can only supply partial truths. If Ariadne's eyes are "lustful," it is not she, but the *sancte puer* (Cupid) (95) and his Idalian mother, Venus (96), addressed in the second person, who have inspired her obsession. Thus the *figura* of Ariadne on the beach, and the *figura* of Ariadne in her bedroom have one common trait: the fate of each is being manipulated by forces

outside her control. In addition, the narrator's use of the terms *Golgos* and *Idalium frondosum* (96) are Hellenistic allusions reminiscent of the Erycinian Venus (72). As such, they are further touches adding to the unreality, or playfulness, of the narrator's approach to his love-heroine. His apostrophes jar the reader by moving him away from Ariadne's tell-tale eyes to the less provocative, more maidenly, sighs and fainting fears, and promises to the gods on Theseus' behalf,[18] utterances which issue from her "little lips" (104). As the reader leaves the Ariadne of this *tableau*, her *figura* remains, as always, a woman shaped for the pursuits of others.

Lines 116-201 are the most dramatic moment of Ariadne's "life" on the *vestis*. She will speak, but not before the narrator, as creator and mover, has made his powers over her clear for those who choose to see. Most critics, however, do not choose to see the *figura* of the master standing behind Ariadne. They ignore the importance of the words with which he prefaces her speech (116-131). Verducci, for example, looks only at Ariadne's speech, and reads into it the heroine's feelings:[19]

> In Catullus' poem, Ariadne first breaks her prolonged silence with a moral evaluation of Theseus' character, citing his perfidy, his forgetfulness, his cruelty, his lack of *clementia* and pity. She enrolls him in the annals of treacherous love. He is all men, an exemplum of male exploitativeness.

But the narrator's Ariadne does nothing on her own. In fact, in lines 116-131 she is placed firmly in the background, while he toys with her coming soliloquy as a digression from his main theme. If, then, as Arkins says, Ariadne's soliloquy consists of "four indignant rhetorical questions...elaborately emphasiz[ing] the fact" of Theseus the traitor,[20]

her indignance is not her own voice. It is the property of a man's art. He is capricious. The problem of digression is laid aside for the pleasure of recasting another image of Ariadne. The narrator takes the reader "inside" the stone effigy and allows details of her seething nature to come to the surface before she speaks. This Ariadne has a "life;" she is able to feel sadness (130, *maestam*), and to rush about in mad confusion searching for her *coniunx* (123). In other words, the reader is being prepared to accept that a stone effigy can now talk.[21]

Of all the recent Catullan critics, only Kinsey has seen the parodic potential of Ariadne's soliloquy. But he defines it in terms of the blameworthiness of Ariadne's past choices, as if she had made them herself.[22] The effect of Kinsey's approach is to turn the invective put into a heroine's mouth against her. What is at fault, however, with the speech is not Ariadne, but the overly-wrought, sometimes epic, sometimes comic language that the narrator has fashioned. Her opening lines are an *exemplum* of all that is to follow (132-133):

> *Sicine me patriis avectam, perfide, ab aris,*
> *perfide, deserto liquisti in litore, Theseu.*
>
> (So then, is this how you have left me, you traitor Theseus, on a deserted shore, you traitor, carried away from my fatherland's sacred altars!)

The same Ariadne who uses the elegant image of her "fatherland's sacred altars" to frame what Fordyce calls an "indignant, disillusioned question,"[23] prefaces her emotional appeal with the prosaic intensified adverb *sicine* (132). The latter is a word drawn from the language of Roman comedy,[24] and it jars in its collocation with the grander formal style of the rest of the line. As Ellis points out, lines 164-170 and 184-187 provide other evidence of the narrator's game of mixing in

language, and even *personae*, from comic models.[25] If the Ariadne of these lines can be heard crying out in the voice of a shipwrecked Palaestra *rediviva*, she is reduced from *regia virgo* and love-heroine to the status of belonging to Labrax (the procurer who stole the free-born Palaestra.)[26] The overlaying of the comic upon the drama of a soliloquy undercuts the pathos of the speech. The narrator thus makes her whole speech nothing more than an exaggerated stage performance which exposes her for what she is: a parody of a heroine, and a pompous and self-contradictory one at that.

These attributes of Ariadne's speech and behavior are highlighted in three closely-related sections of her speech. First, in lines 143-148, Ariadne projects herself as the archetypical *femina misera ac deperdita* (cf. 119):

> *nunc iam nulla viro iuranti femina credat,*
> *nulla viri speret sermones esse fideles;*
> *quis dum aliquid cupiens animus praegestit apisci,*
> *nihil metuunt iurare, nihil promettere parcunt:*
> *sed simul ac cupidae mentis satiata libido est,*
> *dicta nihil meminere, nihil periuria curant.*
>
> (Now, may no woman ever believe any man who makes vows; may no woman hope that his oaths may be trustworthy! While a man's lusting heart is eager to get something, they are not afraid of swearing to anything; they do not hesitate to promise anything. But, as soon as the lust of an amorous mind is sated, they do not care to remember their words or their false oaths.)

Lying beneath Ariadne's pose of morally evaluating Theseus as *exemplum* of male exploitativeness is a woman whose vanity is laid upon her by the narrator. Either this Ariadne is generalizing from the specific case of Theseus to all men, a specious proposition, or it is to be inferred that she knows more about men than the reader had thought a *regia virgo could*. In either case, the woman who has just twice damned Theseus as *perfidus*

(132 and 133) is as treacherous and slippery with words herself. Her phrases *cupiens animus praegestit* (145) and *cupidae mentis libido est* (147) characterize men as driven by lust to betray women and their sacred trusts. But Ariadne, who has already herself been characterized by her "lustful eyes" (cf. 86 and 92), never openly admits to the *libido* that has caused her to betray a father's altars and land.[27] This is because she is the narrator's Ariadne, a woman incapable of controlling the activities of her separate identities.

Ariadne's contradictory nature is particularly clear in a second set of passages, which consist of lines 139-142 and 154-157:

> *at non haec quondam blanda promissa dedisti*
> *voce mihi, non haec miserae sperare iubebas,*
> *sed conubia laeta, sed optatos hymenaeos,*
> *quae cuncta aerii discerpunt irrita venti.*
>
> (But some time ago you did not promise me this in your soothing voice, you did not lead poor me to expect this, but a happy wedding, a longed-for marriage; the winds are blowing away all of these vain promises.)
>
> *quaenam te genuit sola sub rupe leaena,*
> *quod mare conceptum spumantibus exspuit undis,*
> *quea Syrtis, quae Scylla rapax, quae vasta Carybdis,*
> *talia qui reddis pro dulci praemia vita?*
>
> (For what lioness gave birth to you, alone under a cliff? What sea, after conceiving you, spat you out from its foamy waves? What Syrtis, what ravenous Scylla, what vast Carybdis? Such rewards have you given me in return for your life?)

It is ironic that only after the reader has dealt with the significance of Ariadne's utter condemnation of the male gender, he is forced to reconsider the beginnings of her speech in lines 139-142 from a different perspective. What he might have once accepted as "real" promises of marriage by Theseus are now cast in doubt. As soon as the reader starts questioning her trustworthiness, her words lose their force of sincerity.

Is Ariadne manufacturing past *promissa* in order to add to the drama of her suffering as *misera* (140)? Whatever the answer is, Ariadne's penchant for play-acting is quickly matched by her fertile imagination.

In the second of the passages quoted above (154-157), Ariadne slips off the mask of the *femina misera* and puts on, just for a moment, the mask of a *docta puella*. She displays her literary knowledge through an elegant conceit which transforms the history of Theseus' lineage. What is implied by Ariadne's fiction is that, if her lover's *promissa* are lies, so, too, must be the guarantees of his nobility. Building upon word-phrases and brief allusions scattered throughout Greek, Hellenistic, and early Roman poetry, Ariadne fashions an extended conceit "dealing with the barbarous or hard-hearted" nature of Theseus.[28] But if Theseus is attacked and marginalized, by Ariadne's inflated use of myth, as a creature "engendered by a lioness, or Scylla, or Carybdis...etc.," perhaps this fiction of multiple personalities tells equally on the teller, too. Just how much, does not become clear until the last of the three closely-related passages.

In lines 158-163 the Ariadne who has first, expressed her shock at broken promises, then, vented her anger, and, finally, shown haughty contempt for a creature below her, now grovels:

> *si tibi non cordi fuerant conubia nostra,*
> *saeva quod horrebas prisci praecepta parentis,*
> *attamen in vestras potuisti ducere sedes,*
> *quae tibi iucundo famularer serva labore,*
> *candida permulcens liquidis vestigia lymphis,*
> *purpureave tuum consternens veste cubile.*
>
> (If our union had not been in your heart because you dreaded the precepts of a stern parent, you could nevertheless have led me to your abode; I would have served you as a slave, in joyful labor, washing your white feet in clear water, spreading your bed with a crimson coverlet.)

These words are pretentious and contradictory. Not only is Theseus unable to hear them (and thus to deal with her offer), but the picture of slavery that Ariadne fashions is also conditional (cf. 161, the verb *famularer* is subjunctive), sentimental, and romanticized. Her primary duty, at least as she sets it, consists of bathing the white feet of a hero (a man whose nobility she has just reviled). The image *iucundo...labore* (161) is the key to Ariadne's fiction as a *serva*. She smooths over any reality of drudgery by implying that only she would have had the right to touch the waters (*lymphis*, 162), the purity of which might have rehabilitated Theseus (his feet!) to his heroic role as her master: her joyful duty. Once again, however, such a fantasy warns the reader about Ariadne's propensity for theatricality. Thus, when Ariadne exalts herself as *externata malo* (165), a woman "laid low by evil," it is not possible for her, as play-actress, to understand the full extent of the truth that she utters now. Each time that she has spoken in these three sections, the narrator has put partial truths into her mouth. And yet, at the very moment when she speaks a "truth" about herself, the reader almost misses it, that is, he nearly dismisses the significance of it, because it goes by so quickly.

The archetype of the *femina misera ac deperdita* returns with a vengeance, and images of it fill the first half of the final moments of Ariadne's soliloquy (167-201). In this portion (167-187) she magnifies her helplessness and sense of loneliness, and the reader is almost taken in by her vision of her plight. It seems natural that a *femina deserta* would, first, call out in prayer to *Iuppiter omnipotens* (171 ff.), wishing against reality that Theseus had never appeared in her life.[29] There is

a maliciousness to her contrary-to-fact prayer, however, because Ariadne seizes the occasion to reduce Theseus in status to a mere *navita* in line 174. Second, in a series of rhetorical questions (177-183), Ariadne lays out the "realities" that she must endure because she "followed the lead of a youth spattered with a brother's slaughter" (181): her inability (1) to cross the sea (177-179); or (2) to petition a father's aid (180); or (3) to find consolation in the love of a husband (182). And yet because the reader has become used to Ariadne's self-dramatizing language, the piling up of so many pathetic images, an exaggeration in itself, undercuts sympathy for her isolation. Third, and finally, in lines 184-187, the way in which Ariadne plays with negatives effectively takes away any possibility of action (i.e., escape), of hope, or even of nurturing shelter.[30] But just when the reader accepts Ariadne's image of herself as passive, a victim, she acts. The drama of her helplessness and loneliness gives her an unforeseen weapon. She adopts the *persona* of a Fate and prophesies her own death (187, *ostentant omnia letum*).[31] That is, Ariadne introduces the concept of death as vengeance, a notion that dominates the rest of her soliloquy.

Ariadne concludes her soliloquy (188-201) by projecting it as a *querella*[32] (195), a lover's plaintive song of suffering. Here again in sense, language, tone and image, what this heroine claims she is doing runs counter to what she does. The most dramatic effect of her "song" is her invocation of the Eumenides (193), creatures whom she herself describes as grotesque: "wreathed in snaky locks" (193, *anguino redimita capillo*), and "breathing out anger from their vitals" (194, *expirantis...pectoris iras*). The full significance of the invocation

becomes clear when Ariadne describes herself as "consumed with fire, a Fury driven senseless and out of her mind" (197, *ardens, amenti caeca furore*).[33] Like the Clytemnestra of Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, a ghost who tongue-lashes the Furies, Ariadne, too, commands (195, *adventate...audite*) these primitive female spirits. She transforms these deities of vengeance upon kin-killers into agents of death against perjurers.[34] What her rage demands is the "punishment by savage flogging" (192, *multantes vindice poena*) in retribution for the unheroic deeds of her "man."

The noun *virum*, a contracted genitive plural, reminds the reader of Ariadne's generalized attack against the *periuria* (148) of all men. Thus, although Ariadne is a "Fury come late" (cf. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 59-60, *hysteropoinon...Erynyn*), she comes at last [with a] vengeance."[35] Her rage increases and culminates on an injunction-as-curse. Ariadne prays that Theseus "pollute himself and his own by becoming the agent of bloodshed and death" (201, *funestet seque suosque*). In a final desperate act, Ariadne becomes the perversion of "a participant in heroic deeds."[36] This female hero has, first, assumed death like a breastplate (187, *ostentant omnia letum*); now she attacks her "enemy" Theseus and, through the image of "pollution," she turns topsy-turvy the whole idealization of the glory of heroic death.

Her weapon is a curse which results in Theseus' forgetting the commands of his father, commands concerning the color of his sails on return to Athens (220 ff.). In this instance the narrator veers away from the traditional legend where it is Dionysus who brings Theseus into a state of being *immemor*, thus bringing about the deadly consequences at home.[37] As if to add to the drama of such a change in the story of Ariadne

and Theseus, the narrator closes off the soliloquy with an assurance, to the reader, that Jupiter "nods his assent" (204, *annuit*) to the heroine's Thetis-like request for vengeance. Therefore, any reader who looks back to the origin of the woman on the *vestis* in lines 50-51 realizes that the narrator has not been digressing from his central theme. Ariadne's soliloquy is the center-piece that "wondrously tells on the virtues of heroes" (50-51, *vestis.../heroum mira virtutes indicat arte*).

Not all readers who look upon the last of the *tableaux* on the *vestis* (249-266) recognize the extent to which the narrator uses the Ariadne of this scene to reiterate his theme of fallen heroism. Arkins sees a new hero in the *figura* of *florens...Iacchus* (251). The scholar superimposes upon the deity his mythical role as Ariadne's "husband," and he concludes that the "heroic age, whatever its defects, is essentially desirable."[38] But the idea of desire does not describe the heroic age; it fits the sexual image of Bacchus "flitting about somewhere" (251, *parte ex alia...volitabat*), a god "driven by lust" (253, *tuoque incensus amore*) and "seeking you, Ariadne" (253, *te quaerens, Ariadna*). The same creator who silences the Ariadne of this *tableau* seems to know Bacchus so intimately that he can take on the god's voice as the latter searches for his "love" (233, *amore*).

The language surrounding Dionysus also reveals the narrator's awareness of what Ariadne's initiation into the *obscura orgia* of the god will bring (259-260). Two of the reader's senses, sight and hearing, are brought into play, while, at the same time, he must know that he is a *profanus* (260) in his desire to discover some vestige of the god. The reader sees in succession (but never in their relationship), Theseus' boat

on the horizon (249); a wounded (250, *saucia*) Ariadne; a Dionysiac *thiasos* of satyrs and *sileni* (252); maddened bacchantes (254-255); the points of *thyrsi* brandished; and, finally, the limbs of a bullock torn apart (257) and writhing snakes (258). The vague and surrealistic visual effect is matched by sound effect. The reader hears a cacophony of tambourines beaten by fingertips (261); brass cymbals crashing (262); horns blasting out hoarse sounds (263); and flutes screeching in barbarous, terrifying Phrygian song (264). Everything on this portion of the *vestis* hovers, just as Dionysus does. There is no apotheosis, no "happy marriage," no resolution of Ariadne's plight[39] as *femina misera ac deperdita*, no integration of the visual and the aural elements in this sinister *tableau*. The name "Ariadna" (253) and her association with images of Bacchic madness and its divine cohorts take the reader back full circle to the representation of "*Ariadna*" as the stone effigy of a bacchante and as the abstraction of "*furores*" (61). The narrator's "*Ariadna*" disappears -- a woman who was first a *figura* on a painting, then a stone statue, then a series of *personae* (comic, epic, and tragic), now vanishes from the world of the narrator's text. Ariadne leaves as she had entered, a crazed woman, unable to know her "self" or to form any bonds with others, god or man.

II. THESEUS

Although Theseus is a *figura* on the same tableau as Ariadne, man and woman never meet. Just as Ariadne's divine lover Bacchus flits about somewhere on the *vestis*, so, too, does Theseus, her mortal lover (cf. 53,

Thesea cedentem, 213, *linquentem gnatum*, and 245-246, *Thesea...ingressus*). The narrator's distancing of male and female is not simply an attempt to represent artistically the personal consequences of an unhappy, or betrayed, love-affair. If to exist as "Ariadna" is, as we have seen, to be *furens*, then there is no place for her in Theseus' heroic world. *Ferox Theseus* (73) stands in opposition to the *regia virgo*.

The nature of Theseus' difference from Ariadne is expressed through his commitment to the heroic ideal. The full significance of this ideal is not obvious until a passage late in the poem (382-386), which provides a final look back on his world. The noun *pietas* (386) shocks the reader and forces him to re-evaluate the *tableaux* concerning Theseus (76-85 and 105-115; 202-248). *Pietas* locates Theseus' code of heroism not in an archaic Greek civilization but, rather, in the Roman world. Boyle offers the best perspective on why *(pius) Theseus* and *furens Ariadna* are doomed to fail as partners:[40]

> *Furor*, as is well known, together with its cognates, *furo*, *furens*, and *furia*, connotes destructive, non-rational behavior and can be used to refer to hysteria, madness, rage, blood-lust, passion, love, anger. *Pietas*, on the other hand, and its cognate, *pius*, connote (a) a kind of righteousness, based upon a sense of duty towards one's family, one's country, one's destiny or one's gods and (b)...the prime human virtue of pity or compassion.

The narrator, by putting a Roman *persona* upon Theseus, creates a one-dimensional, simplified *figura*, the very opposite of the fragmented and complex *figura* of Ariadne. A gulf between them is opened. Ariadne is a once-majestic princess sunken through her rage to madness; by contrast, (*pius*) Theseus is a resolute man (82, *optavit)*, self-composed and devoted to his idea of his obligations. Instead of a Greek Theseus associated with numerous *virtutes* (51),[41] however, the narrator's Roman Theseus is

dedicated to a single *fervida virtus*, a sacred cause which becomes the *emblema* of his existence on the *tableau*.

The first of the two sections (75-85 and 104-115) contains the definition of *fervida virtus*. Theseus has a "mission," namely, to rescue Athens from a "cruel ruin" (76, *crudeli peste*) which has been inflicted on it by Crete. His mission is not, however, a quest for personal renown or glory, the *raisons d'être* of conventional Greek heroes (e.g., 4-7). What moves *ferox Theseus* is patriotism and, further, a readiness to sacrifice his own life, should that be necessary (81-82, *ipse suum...corpus/ proicere optavit*). In addition to Theseus' display of compassion and love for "his dear Athenians," he exhibits an almost filial devotion to the physical entity of the "narrow walls" (80, *angusta moenia*) of his father's city. All these levels of *fervida virtus* show the *color Romanus* of Theseus' character. In a *tableau* which emphasizes the grim reality of human flesh served to a Minotaur (79), of "sad cargoes of funerals" (83, *funera...nec funera portarentur*), and of an impious foreign king (75), Theseus attracts the reader to him as the one *figura* "bearing a distant hope."[42] Unlike Ariadne, Theseus has high ideals, a greater *amor* to serve.

At first, Theseus' cause is magnified into a moral battle between good and evil. Not only is Athens made to seem, through the phrase *angusta moenia* (80), small and vulnerable, but the evils that beset it and threaten to ruin its culture are also placed side-by-side in line 80 with the edifice of the city. The collocation increases the stature of Theseus as champion against a brutal destruction of a precarious civilization. The narrator has already played with the dangers heaped upon Athens. In

lines 74-75 the curved shores of Piraeus seem bounded and confined by the "built-up sacred halls of state" of the unjust Minos.[43] As a final touch to the image of a Crete oppressing Athens by means of human sacrifice, the narrator transforms Minos' *templa* into "haughty/arrogant (impious?) abodes" (85, *sedesque superbas*). The king himself is recast from *iniustus* to *magnanimus*, a reversal that strains the reader's credulity.

It is against this geographical, political, and moral background that the scene of combat (105-115) between Theseus and the Minotaur, the "cruel monster" (101, *saevum...monstrum*) stands out. And yet, although Theseus emerges as victor, in fact as a hero laden "with much praise" (112, *multa cum laude*), it is precisely here that the narrator begins to shift the reader's perception of the man being glorified. The immediate cause is the intervention of a passage dealing with Ariadne (86-104). Having betrayed her duties as *filia* of Minos and as half-sister of the Minotaur because of her lust, Ariadne uses the *filum* (113) by which Theseus threads his way to safety out of the labyrinth as a means of assigning worth or value to her *amor*. But this image of an *impia Ariadna* positioned behind *ferox Thesea* ultimately serves neither of them well. First, it taints Theseus' heroic attempt with her pollution of blood-ties. Second, it reduces Ariadne as the savior of Theseus by omitting any scene in which the handing over of the gift of thread would have exalted her as an active agent. And, finally, the thread itself suggests that Theseus, although brave enough to face the beast, did not have sufficient forethought to deal with the challenge posed by leaving the labyrinth.

The second source of the undercutting of Theseus is the narrator's use of similes in lines 105-111 as a substitute not only for the combat,

but also for the contestants:

> *nam velut in summo quatientem bracchia Tauro,*
> *quercum aut conigeram sudanti cortice pinum*
> *indomitus turbo contorquens flamine robur*
> *eruit (illa procul radicitus exturbata*
> *prona cadit, late quaevis cumque obvia frangens),*
> *sic domito saevum prostravit corpore Theseus,*
> *nequiquam vanis iactantem cornua ventis.*
>
> (For just as on the summit of the Taurus, the untamed twisting whirlwind uproots an oak or a cone-bearing pine with sweating bark (it falls prone, far-off, ripped out by its roots, breaking whatever is in its path); thus Theseus, having broken its body, cast down the cruel beast, vainly tossing its horns in the empty winds.)

The reader sees not a labyrinth but the Taurus, a mountain range in Cilicia. The layering of the trees which represent parts of the Minotaur's half-human, half-animal body (e.g.,105, his arms, *bracchia*), suggest the terrain of a mountainside. The reader moves his gaze upwards, from the level of oak (106, *quercum*) to the higher level of pine (106, *pinum*).[44] The resin seeping out of the Minotaur's hybrid cone-bearing body (l. 106, *sudanti cortice*) makes the reader aware that the tree has a life of its own and that this life belongs properly to the natural scene.

By contrast, Theseus is described as a "whirlwind" (107, *turbo*), an impersonal and destructive force uprooting the life of the tree. At the very moment of his act of heroism, then, Theseus is similar to the cursing Ariadne when he makes his irrational onslaught against nature. This Theseus is a hero who "lays low" (110, *prostravit*) the beast by ravaging everything that comes in his way. The effect of the simile is to draw the reader's sympathy to the victim, the Minotaur/tree. He is part of the swath being cut by a hero in an indiscriminate act of destruction. As the tragic victim in this scene, the Minotaur tosses the horns of his tree-head (111, *cornua*) in vain against the savage winds. When Theseus'

heroism is viewed from this perspective, the word *error* (115), which closes this *tableau*, seems less a reference to the "perplexity"[45] of the labyrinth's passageways than a hint at Theseus' "self-delusion" (*error*)[46]. The hero fails to understand how far his method of killing the Minotaur has caused him to "wander off the course" (*error*) of his *fervida virtus*.

Error sets up the atmosphere of negativity that pervades Theseus' second and final appearance on the *vestis* (202-248). Not only is his victory clouded by his lack of foresight and his tragic *error*; now the narrator reveals that Theseus has a greater flaw: emptiness. The narrator's flat, one-dimensional Roman hero Theseus is betrayed by phrases like *caeca mentem caligine*(207), *oblito...pectore* (208), *prius constanti mente* (209, cf. 238), and *mente immemori* (248). He is a caricature of his *fervida virtus*. He exists as only two physical details: blonde hair (98, *in flavo...hospite*) and white feet (162, *candida vestigia*). The narrator makes sport of his hero by spending more time on the materials of the ship that carries Theseus from Athens to Crete than on the hero. The reader's attention is drawn in particular to the "stain on the sails"(225, *infecta...lintea*) swaying from the mast and to the "twisted ropes" (235, *intorti...rudentes)* that are to hoist up the "white sails" (235, *candidaque...vela*) denoting Theseus' safe return home. The body of a ship stands for all that Theseus is, and it is a body directed and defined by the commands of his father.

As if to drive home the idea of a mindless and empty Theseus, the narrator places him into a past situation of one-sided dialogue. In lines 215-237 Aegeus delivers what appears, at first, to be a moving farewell address to his son. The father cries out twice, *gnate, gnate* (215-216),

in simple words which express a degree of love and affection found nowhere else in the poem. Theseus is treasured "more than a long life;" Aegeus' eyes "have not yet taken their fill of his son" (220).

But the pathos of the moment dissipates as soon as the reader comprehends the meaning of what Aegeus himself readily admits to (216 ff.). Father and son have lived apart up to this point, because Aegeus had abandoned his son at birth.[47] Now Aegeus' *fortuna* (218) forces him to send his son to fulfill a destiny to which neither heroic father nor heroic son can say "no." Aegeus describes his anguish as a *querella*, the very term which Ariadne had used earlier of her lover's lament (cf. 195). Here, as in that passage, *querella* is misapplied, because what Aegeus connects love with is an act of "fouling his gray hair" (224) in anticipation of grieving for a dead son. In addition, he uses assertions of anguish and love to add emotional weight to the *mandata* he issued to Theseus. Just as Aegeus directs and defines the ship that takes Theseus away, his *mandata* seek to shape and to control his son's outlook and intellect to be *constans* (209 and 238): a reflection of a father's will.

No matter how the reader receives the soliloquy, he cannot ignore the absence of real bonding between father and son. In the Ariadne soliloquy Theseus was reduced to a flee(t)ing image on the horizon, a ship so far away that no breeze might carry to it the sound of her voice. During Aegeus' speech the reader cannot even locate Theseus in the geography of the Athens inscribed on the *vestis*. This same Theseus has no voice with which to utter fidelity to his father's commands, no eyes with which to gaze upon his aged gray head; no hands to reach out to support a bereaved father. Theseus is even more empty than Ariadne was

as "stone effigy of a bacchante."

Nevertheless, even though Theseus' *fervida virtus* is undercut by his failure to be *memor* or *constans*, and his individuality is left unexplored (because he never speaks), the overall effect of the scene between father and son projects them as victims of Ariadne. As Aegeus plunges headlong to death from his *moenia* (244), the reader is overwhelmed with the sadness and the futility of such an extreme act. The sorrow of the occasion overrides any of the burden of the responsibility which is laid upon Theseus in lines 247-248. What the reader remembers as he leaves this scene is that Aegeus has died for love, just as his son Theseus had earlier gone out from Athens in an undertaking of love. Thus, in their willingness to die, father and son receive their sole kin-connection.

But what meaning does anything that moves human beings -- love, anger, self-sacrifice, duty, betrayal, Bacchic frenzy -- have in this *vestis*? Each time that the narrator has introduced a *figura* into his poem/canvas, he has used the expression "they say" (75, *perhibent*; 124, *perhibent*; and 212, *ferunt olim*). He insists that his story is a retelling of "their" story, and thus leaves both the sources of, and the "truths" themselves vague, timeless, unknowable.[48] The *tableaux* of such a canvas can only be illusory at best, because the narrator's *mira ars* is but a game of shifting pictures and of toying with the reader's emotions. This game, however, is neither an entertainment nor a rhetorical *tour de force*. The narrator has brought to life a Greek heroic world, then dramatized its strange *color Romanus*, and finally, destroyed all life on the *vestis*. Death -- as Aegeus' suicide, as Theseus' failure to be *pius*, as Bacchus' crazed *orgia*, and as Ariadne's maddened curse -- this is all

that the reader sees when he steps back from the canvas. Death and the impossibility of the existence of human ties is all that the narrator sees. This is his story.

NOTES

1. T. S. Eliot, *Selected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1961). A part of the title of this chapter is taken from Horace's *De Arte Poetica*, 361.

2. On *figura* as an artistic representation, *OLD* cites the following: Propertius 2. 30. 35; Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 10. 2. 15; Cicero, *Natura Deorum*, 1. 71.

3. Catullus arranges the *figurae* of Ariadne, Theseus, and Aegeus so that not only are the lovers played off one against another, as well as father and son, but also, through the motif of the *querella*, Ariadne and Aegeus are subtly compared in terms of their "affection" for Theseus. Further, on *variatio* see G. Williams, *Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), pp. 724 ff., and H. Dettmer, *Horace: a Study in Structure* (Hildesheim: Olms - Vidmann, 1983),3. pp. 1-3 and 359-360.

4. P. Y. Forsyth, *The Poems of Catullus. A Teaching Text* (New York: University Press of America, 1986), p. 348.

5. E. W. Leach, "Ekphrasis and the Theme of Artistic Failure in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*," *Ramus* 3 (1974), p. 104. E. T. Merrill, *Catullus* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1893), p. 136, n. 50, remarks:

> Episodic digressions of a similar character, depicting actions represented in graving or embroidery, are as old as the description of the shield of Achilles (Hom. *Il.* XVIII, 478 ff.), and are multiplied in later writers.

6. Leach, p. 106.

7. *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. by Thomas H. Johnson (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1960), poem 1129.

8. In Liddell and Scott, p. 448, the collocation of the following terms suggests their interrelationship: (1) *ekphradzo*, "to tell over, recount" (in Greek tragedy); (2) *ekphrasis*, "a description,...a title of several late poems descriptive of works of art...; and (3) *ekphrasso*, "to remove obstacles, open."

9. S. M. Gilbert and S. Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic. The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 73.

10. B. Arkins, *Sexuality in Catullus* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1982), p. 149.

11. Adler, p. 148.

12. *Ibid.*

13. Unless otherwise cited, the Latin text is that of K. Quinn, *Catullus. The Poems* (London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1989). Hereafter the text is cited as Quinn, *The Poems*. All translations of the Latin are my own and aim to be literal.

14. *Contra*, M. O'Connell, "Pictorialism and Meaning in Catullus 64," *Latomus* 36 (1977), p. 750: "We see first her eyes and the emotion expressed in her face...." O'Connell defines the physical details of the body as "pictorial correlatives of her unconcern for anything except the departing Theseus."

15. Adler, p. 112.

16. Forsyth, *The Poems*, *ad loc.*

17. D. P. Harmon, "The Concept of Alienation in Catullus' Poetry," diss., Northwestern University (1968), p. 48.

18. Putnam, p. 173.

19. F. Verducci, *Ovid's Toyshop of the Heart: Epistolae Heroidum* (Princeton: University Press, 1985), p. 267.

20. Arkins, p. 150.

21. Adler has a different view of the soliloquy. She believes that the words Ariadne speaks are "presented to us solely from her subjective point of view" (p. 112).

22. Kinsey, p. 917.

23. Fordyce, p. 295.

24. D. O. Ross, *Style and Tradition in Catullus* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 74, notes the colloquial effect but chooses to overlook it in this passage:

> It is worth adding here an observation on *sicine*, a word frequent in comedy, but found nowhere in poetry outside Catullus and Propertius. Ariadne begins her tirade with this repeated, emotional colloquialism (64. 132, 134), used also by Catullus himself in addressing Rufus (77. 3, *sicine subrepsti mi*)....

25. Ellis, p. 312, *ad loc.*

26. Cf. Plautus, *Rudens*, 204 ff.:

nunc quam spem aut opem aut consilii quid capessam?
ita hic sola solis locis compotita sum.
hic saxa sunt, hic mare sonat,
neque quisquam homo mihi obviam venit.
hoc quod induta sum, summae spes oppido.
nec cibo nec loco tecta quo sim scio:
quae mihist spes, qua me vivere velim?

27. The only time Ariadne hints at her role as traitor comes in lines 180-182. And yet even here tones of self-pity and anger at Theseus' rejection of her color her confession. Ovid's Ariadne admits to her guilt only insofar as her act of giving the thread to Theseus, an act which precipitates everything else. Cf. *Heroides* 10, 103 ff.

28. A. S. Pease, *Publi Vergili Maronis. Aeneidos, Liber Quartus* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967), p. 316, uses this phrase to describe Dido's damnation of Aeneas as lover. Virgil's debt to Catullus in these lines is obvious, and Pease's commentary draws out each aspect (pp. 316-317).

29. Cf. Euripides' *Medea*, where the nurse opens the Prologue with a similar wish that Jason and the Argo had never reached the shores of Colchis. The mad Medea and the mad Ariadne are becoming one imagistically.

30. Ellis' translation of line 184, which describes the natural habitat, becomes symbolic of Ariadne's cold heart, her only shelter: "It is an uninhabited waste shore, an island of desolation."

31. *OLD*, p. 76, cites as common meanings of *ostendo*: "to be a visible sign of, to display oneself as, to disclose (a fact);" and "to hold out the prospect of (rewards, punishments)."

32. In fact, everything before line 188 is more properly a *querella*. This term, which primarily denotes a song of complaint sung before the bolted door of an obdurate mistress (*paraclausithyron*), has a tradition that goes back to Greek antecedents. But the lover is always a male, hence Ariadne's song of complaint has no viable tradition behind it. F. O. Copley, *Exclusus Amator*. A Study *in Latin Love Poetry*, (*Philological Monographs*, Number XVII, 1956), pp. 33-34, gives the common features of a man's *querella*:

> Thus the Roman lover, like his Greek predecessor, suffers from the pains of love; he, too, tells of the tears he has shed; the winds, the rain, and the snow fill his vigil with misery. His lady is cruel, heedless, and deceitful; her heart is of stone, hard as oak or steel; she is as harsh as the serpent or the stormy sea. Like the Greek, the Roman lover is overcome by a power he cannot resist: *contra quis feret arma deos*? is his excuse for his behavior, too, as he comes

humbly to his lady's door and kneels the kiss her threshold.

33. *OLD* cites as the second most common meaning of *caecus*: "having one's judgment impaired, mentally or morally blind," particularly when one's judgment is affected by passions or fears.

34. Forsyth, *The Poems*, p. 386, *ad loc.*, draws out this important idea. It should be noted that Ariadne is twisting the traditional role of the Furies to suit her own purpose. As F. Zeitlin points out, they are properly deities who "pursue and suck the blood from their living victims...," in "The Dynamics of Misogyny in the *Oresteia*," *Arethusa* 11 (1978), p. 159. Cf. also A. Michelini, "Characters and Character Change in Aeschylus: Klytaimestra and the Furies," *Ramus* 8 (1979), p. 158, who, again, having called the Furies "[u]gly, aged, polluted with the effluvia of death," says that they are the very antithesis of new gods, such as Dionysus.

35. The quoted phrases are from A. Lebeck's translation of two related passages in Aeschylus, in *The Oresteia. A Study in Language and Structure* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 13.

36. Adler, p. 113.

37. Giangrande, "Catullus 64," p. 230, defines *immemor* as an act of falling "prey to amnesia."

38. Arkins, p. 152. Forsyth, "Catullus 64, Dionysus Reconsidered," in *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History*, ed C. Deroux (Brussels: Latomus, 1980), p. 100, summarizes the problem of the Dionysus *tableau* as follows:

> What, then, are we to make of the Dionysus episode: a joyful salvation, ending in wedded bliss, or a violent act of rape, increasing Ariadne's torment? Or something in-between?

39. Harmon, pp. 60-61, first says, "The coming of Bacchus is unexplainable" (p. 60). On the next page he says, "If we are to conjecture about the reason for Bacchus' coming to Ariadne, we should stress the fact that her alienated condition makes her a fit subject for Bacchus' concern." Such a statement is hardly praise of the "marvelous heights" to which Ariadne as "Dionysiac woman is exalted...."

40. A. J. Boyle, "The Meaning if the *Aeneid*: A Critical Inquiry," *Ramus* 1 (1971), pp. 64-65.

41. E.g., his hunting of the Calydonian boar, his journey to the underworld, his mission with the Athenians to capture Thebes; his "rape" of Helen, etc. For an account of these and other exploits of Theseus, see Apollodorus, *The Library*, Vol. I, with and English trans. by Sir James George Frazer (London: Heinemann, 1921).

42. E. Block, "The Failure to Thrive: The Theme of Parents and Children in the *Aeneid* and its Iliadic Models," *Ramus* 9 (1980), p. 130.

43. The translation of the Latin belongs to Ellis, p. 297. He also notes that *templa* can refer to the labyrinth because of "the association of such structures with sepulture, and the divine honors paid to mythical heroes after their death...." The epithet *iniustus* ia a striking one, since Minos is traditionally seen as one of the "just" judges in the Underworld.

44. Ellis, p. 303, n. 105.

45. This is Ellis' translation, p. 306, *ad loc.*, of the noun *error*.

46. Catullus uses the noun *error* two other times. In c. 22.20, the word refers to the self-delusion that all of us operate under in recognizing our personal faults. In c. 63.18, *errores* denotes the maddened roamings of Cybele's crazed *Gallae*.

47. Cf. Pausanias I. 27. 8 and Plutarch, *Theseus*, 6.

48. L. Richardson, *Political Theory in Republican Rome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944), p. 50, interprets "they say" as an indication that "Catullus does not think of his poem as a direct inspiration but as a story which he has received from tradition and is reorganizing artistically."

CHAPTER THREE

"I SAW SOME CREATURES PAINTED IN A PICTURE ONCE..."

Delight becomes pictorial
When viewed through pain, --
More fair, because impossible
That any gain.

The mountain at a given distance
In amber lies;
Approached the amber flits a little, --
And that's the skies!

Emily Dickinson, 45

To lose one's faith surpasses
The loss of an estate
Because estates can be
Replenished -- faith cannot.

Inherited with life,
Belief but once can be;
Annihilate a single clause,
And Being's beggary!

Emily Dickinson, 119[1]

Emily Dickinson's phrase "Being's beggary" is an apt focus for the multitude of creatures who lie on the edges of the central canvas. As soon as the reader has perceived the emptiness of Ariadne, Theseus, and Aegeus, how can the addition of countless other fleeting *figurae* (Argonauts, sea-nymphs, Peleus and Thetis, human and divine wedding guests) revive the reader's belief in "Being" in *Carmen* 64? In the narrator's story, one created out of pain, the "whole truth" of "Being" can only be viewed "slant." His words have already, and will continue to,

"annihilate" old poetic truths about the possibility of "any gain" from the ideals traditionally associated with the heroic: romance, nobility, and the glory of self-sacrifice. This chapter looks at three of the four edges framing the central canvas (1-49, 265-304, and 305-383). The dark hue of *amor* in lines 50-264 seeps into the framing edges. It now reveals more about the sinister implications of the Ariadne-Theseus *vestis*, and more about the nature of the pain driving the narrator to create his vision of home's "beggary."

FRAME ONE.

The poem begins with an image of a mountain, and what happens to this fragment of nature is an *emblema* of everything else in the epyllion. Like Ariadne and the Minotaur, Mount Pelion is a hybrid, as both natural haunt and paternal *figura*. This mountain has a "summit/head" (*vertice*), out of which have "sprung/been born" (*prognatae*) "pine(s)/daughters" (*pinus*). But this intimate familial union of male and female, which forms the first impression of life in a *domus*, is, to borrow from Edna St. Vincent Millay, "altered, estranged, disintegrated, lost,"[2] as quickly as it is created by the narrator.

With the passive voice verb *dicuntur* (2), the narrator both distances himself from his story and reshapes the traditions associated with the voyage of Argo into an account which is unconventional, strange, and sinister. His work here, as elsewhere on the framing edges, involves *picturae*, impressionistic word-pictures, not lengthy *tableaux vivants*. At the same time that the narrator marks out his *pictura* as untraditional,

the pine-daughters are also estranged from everything they know: their "father," their local waters, and their home-land. The reason for the separation of father and daughters is left unexplained. At first, the waves through which they swim are not simply "clear," but the adjective *liquidas* (2) also conveys a sense of the instability of the waters,[3] and thus hints at the presence of dangers as the pine-daughters enter the unknown -- the waves of Phasis and the land of Aeetes (3). And yet the fluctuating natural realm is not the greatest harm facing the pine-daughters.

The feminine life suggested by the image of the *prognatae...pinus* (1) is altered and lost forever. In line 10 the pine-daughters are transformed into "the pine-weavings of the curved (i.e., altered and perverted)[4] keel of a boat" (*pinea...inflexae texta carinae*). Feminine creatures have become a neuter creation, a hybrid-boat, one fashioned by a hybrid-*creatrix* (8-10, *diva.../fecit.../coniungens*). The androgynous goddess Athena is credited by the narrator as the shipwright of the *carina*, a detail which is not a traditional one.[5] These pine-wood planks form the temporary *domus* for a group of men, *figurae* whom the narrator ennobles with the noble phrase *lecti iuvenes* (4). But just as soon as the Argonauts are introduced, they are themselves transformed, through the collocation of *robora/pubis*, into "oak(s)/youth(s)."

The reader's perspective on this part of the frame is best guided by Ellis' commentary on a certain detail. At first, it is easy to dwell on the traditional notion of the "boldness" of the Argonauts (6, *ausi sunt*), as well as on their "great desire" (5, *optantes*) which impels them to take up the quest. But the romance associated with the golden fleece

(5, *auratam pellem*) dissipates with the verb *avertere* (5). The connotations of this word have little, if anything, to do with the idea of a glory-bringing adventure for a prize. *Avertere* not only means "to turn away," "to steal," "to embezzle," but also, as Ellis notes, "seems chosen in reference to driving off cattle, its common though not invariable meaning."[6] With his selection of *avertere*, therefore, the narrator smiles as he steals elements of another story about a heroic act of cattle-rustling (cf. the *Hymn to Hermes*) and conflates it with the exploits of his own heroes. The game of literary allusion, however, quickly turns sinister in lines 6-7, where the oak-youths are reduced to a single physical detail: feminine "fir-wood palms" (7, *abiegnis... palmis*). How far, the reader wonders, will this creator go in his game of splicing together the separate realms of the natural and the human; in blurring the distinctions among the genders; and in manipulating disparate details?

The very fact that the reader finds himself so perplexed this early in the poem is itself part of the narrator's preparation for something even more sinister -- the advent of a *monstrum* (11-18):[7]

> *illa rudem cursu prima imbuit Amphitrite.*
> *quae simul ac rostro ventosum proscidit aequor*
> *tortaque remigio spumis incanuit unda,*
> *emersere feri candenti e gurgite vultus,*
> *aequorae monstrum Nereides admirantes.*
> *illa, atque <haud> alia, viderunt luce marinas*
> *mortales oculis nudato corpore Nymphas*
> *nutricum tenus exstantes e gurgite cano.*
>
> (In her passage, she first stained untilled Amphitrite. As soon as she ploughed through the windy sea with her prow, and the twisting waves grew white with foam from her oars, wild white faces arose from the white abyss -- Nereids gazing in wonder at the monster. By the light of that day -- and no other -- the mortals saw, with their own eyes, sea-nymphs, with their bodies nude, coming out from the white abyss, even

up to their nursing breasts.)

The "strange creature"[8] that arouses such intense wonderment (15, *admirantes*) in the Nereids is something more, the reader realizes, than a fir-palmed *carina*. Hidden within that construct are fragments of the bodies of Pelion's pine-daughters. Thus the neuter noun *monstrum* underlines both the monstrous and portentous aspect of all the details of the first scene on the framing edge. The noun also forces the reader to look back and to think again about the glory that might have surrounded the idea of a pioneering sea-journey (10, *prima*), a one-time quest. This journey has resulted in an archetypical act of violation, one which affects the representation of every other female *figura* in the poem. The *carina* "stains" (11, *imbuit*); the *carina* "ploughs through" Amphtrite's "inexperienced sea."[9]

All of these portents culminate in the apparition of sea-nymphs springing forth from the water and thus exposing their breasts. Because of the sea's personification as Amphitrite, the nymphs come forth (18, *e gurgite cano*) as if from the *domus* of the female body of a sister. Everything is wrong here. Mortals catch sight of immortals, a vision not to be seen (16, *illa atque <haud> alia...luce*). Moreover, the virginal nature of the nymphs is contradicted by the visual detail of their "lactating nipples" (cf. Ariadne's *lactentis...papillas*). The *hapax nutricum* (18) places the nymphs into the realm of the *monstrum*. In addition, the association of this noun with notions of maternity and fecundity[10] undercuts any of the erotic potential of a scene in which the mortal Peleus first looks upon his immortal "love," the sea-nymph Thetis.

With the impersonal verb *fertur* (19, "it is said"), the narrator in

effect erases all of the previous details of the *pictura* he has just created. He begins again, this time with a display of verbal, not visual, technique. The collocation *Thetidis Peleus* (19, the only time these two names are so closely linked) introduces what the reader thinks will be the principal *figurae* of the epyllion. But the love burning in Peleus is a passion left unelaborated, an oddity, especially if their match is to be viewed from a romantic perspective. *Fertur* leaves their love hypothetical, as if the narrator will not stand behind his own assertion. He seems more interested in fashioning a rhetorical triplet displaying three cases of Thetis' name (19, *tum Thetidis*; 20, *tum Thetis*; and 21, *tum Thetidi*). This alliterative display displaces the heroic mortal lover by throwing all the emphasis on Thetis, the focus of a word-game.

Within a single line, *amor* is transformed into the prospect of marriage (20, *hymenaeos*), one over which Peleus has no control, and Thetis little. Thetis can only "not despise union with a mortal" (20, *humanos non despexit hymenaeos*), because the union itself is in the hands of a stronger outside force. Just as the narrator manipulates the *figurae* of this framing edge, so, too, Jupiter, the *divum genitor*, shapes the *figurae* of his divine realm according to his own design. As "sire," he coerces mortal and immortal to accept a "yoking" through marriage. (21, *iugandum*).[11]

In the same breath with the reference to the yoking, the narrator interrupts his story of marriage. The next ten lines (22-30) are an invocation which is both out of place in the text and couched in language omitting an address to the traditional inspiration of epic poetry, the Muses.[12] Instead, the narrator chooses an apostrophe hailing (22, *salvete*)

heroes now vanished from the *pictura* of this frame (22, *heroes...deum genus*). A certain excess of language makes everything ring false. The heroes are quickly reinvoked as the "good" *progenies* of <"good"> mothers (23 and 23b), women who have not yet appeared on the frame. Then, through the iteration of *vos...vos* (24), the narrator for a third time calls out to this faceless, nameless, unlocatable group of *figurae*. His choice of the verb *compellabo* (24) not only promises a future address (which never comes), but it also plays with negative associations of two forms of the root *compell-*. The good heroes and mothers are, first, "driven together," "assembled," or "constrained" to come into the presence of the narrator; second, once assembled, they may possibly be "accosted" and "upbraided," or "called to account" for themselves by their creator.

Just as quickly as a hint of reproach slips in, it, too, vanishes. Overlaying *compellabo* is the lavish vocative formula, *teque adeo eximie felicibus aucte* (25), in which Peleus is singled out from the *heroes* as superior, even to their kind. His particular *aristeia* derives not from his own exploits on a quest, but from his *kleos* as the selected bridegroom-to-be of Thetis. If, however, the reader looks carefully at the name *Peleu* (26), he sees that the man is not simply hero or bridegroom, but a *monstrum* of sorts. The name appears after his transformation into a neuter "pillar" (26, *columen*), an architectural support of the *domus* of Thessaly. This is a hybrid Peleus.

His oddity is compounded as the narrator switches from vocative addresses to rhetorical questions. Because the clause beginning with *cui Iuppiter ipse...*(26-27) intervenes between the name of Peleus and the accusative pronouns *tene...tene* (28-29), the reader can not be confident

that Peleus is either the only lover (cf. Jupiter's *suos...amores*, 26) whom Thetis has embraced, or the only bridegroom whom Tethys and Oceanus have "conceded" (29, *concessit*) to accept. Clause by clause, nuance by nuance, the narrator's invocation annihilates the reader's belief that such a couple will ever "celebrate an unequivocal blissful wedding."[13]

The final *pictura* of the first framing edge is not the consummation of the marriage of Peleus and Thetis but, rather, two conflicting visions of *domus*: royal (31-37 and 43-49), and rural (38-42). In the creation of the image of the *regia domus*, the narrator plays with both geography and tradition by altering the locale of the wedding: Mount Pelion is replaced by *Pharsaliam...Pharsalia tecta* (37).[14] The iteration of this place-name and others (Thessaly, Cierium [Scyros?], Tempe, Crannon, Larisa, 33-36) is, however, itself a word-game of shifting geographical regions (north and south) and ages (heroic and historical).[15] While the specific territory of the wedding can not be located, the *domus* where the event takes place is visually described. It is made the hub of all activity (32, *advenere ...conventu...frequentat;* 35, *deseritur...linquunt;* 37, *coeunt... frequentat*). The *domus*, not the bridal pair, receives the throngs of guests arriving, accepts their gifts, and sees the joy on each face (34, *declarant gaudia vultu*). The expression *declarant gaudia vultu*(34) treats the joy as something superficial, as a mask painted on the countenance of guests rather than an emotion deeply felt. The superficiality conveyed by the image permeates the *regia domus*. As Bramble has argued, the wedding house is an "artifice" and an *emblema* of decadence.[16] Since the presence of the *pulvinar...geniale* (47)[17] seems to prepare for a description of a Roman religious ceremony, the piling up of

details such as gleaming gold and silver (44), ivory legs on a table (45), polished ivory-inlaid marriage couch (47), and crimson drapery (48-49), is jarring. The opulence undercuts the solemn potential of the occasion and reminds the reader of something else Roman: suspicion of, if not outright distaste for, excessive display of exotic wealth, *luxuria*.[18]

In contrast to images of material splendor and human beings thronging the royal *domus*, stands the undeniable desolation and emptiness of the rural *domus*. The narrator seals off the latter realm by means of a chain of negatives: (38, *nemo*; and 39-41, *non...non...non*) in a futile attempt, as it were, to protect it from any further loss.[19] He fails. The natural scene has already been altered. The rural *figurae* are missing; they have been transformed into an impersonal, faceless group of wedding guests feigning joy in the *regia domus* of Peleus. The absence of these *figurae* from their proper setting is marked by a rural *domus* in which time stands still. The landscape seems suspended in a state of entropy. Through images of rust on the ploughshare (42), unpruned vines (39-40), untended bullock, and untilled soil (40), the narrator demonstrates how Earth pays for the "happy" wedding feast: her natural gifts lie in waste, replaced by "wedding-gifts" (34, *dona*). The one-time occasion of Peleus' and Thetis' marriage has destroyed the primal bonds between rural *figurae* and their vital source of life, the Earth. The reader who leaves this first framing edge must question why a marriage, which ought to have brought with it the "happiness of fairy-tale romance"[20] is so deeply ingrained with images of decadence and superficiality, on the one hand, and separation, disintegration, and loss, on the other.

FRAME TWO.

The first *pictura* of lines 265-304 is the *pulvinar* of Peleus and Thetis, which is enveloped (266, *complexa suo velabat amictu*) by the dark folds of the Ariadne-Theseus *vestis*. The reader's premonition about a marriage ill-fated is aroused again at the very moment he believes the ceremony is to commence. What he sees, however, is the rural *figurae*, the *Thessala pubes* (267), "giving way to the company of divine wedding guests" (268, *sanctis coepit decedere divis*). But there is only a glimpse of this activity, because the human wedding guests are immediately transformed, by means of an extended simile, into the waves of a morning sea-scape (269-275):

> *...qualis flatu placidum mare matutino*
> *horrificans Zephyrus proclivas incitat undas,*
> *Aurora exorients vagi sub limina Solis,*
> *quae tarde primum clementi flamine pulsae,*
> *procedunt lenique sonant plangore cachinni,*
> *post vento crescente magis increbrescunt*
> *purpuraeque procul nantes ab luce refulgent:*
>
> (Just as Zephyr, causing the placid sea to bristle with a morning breeze, rouses the sloping waves -- as Dawn springs forth from under the dwelling of the wandering Sun -- which move out slowly at first, pushed by a clement breeze, and their laughter resounds in their gentle beating; afterwards, as the wind rises, they quicken more and more, and glisten purple from the light, swimming away.)

On the surface, the simile transports the reader into a pleasurable realm, a world devoid of anything injurious. Within one line, however, the reader senses the "subliminal menace"[21] of the language. Zephyr, the westerly wind, might be "ruffling" the sea-surface, and yet the present participle *horrificans* commonly means "causing terror" or "making rough." The image of the *placidum mare* (269) is being altered. Similarly, in line

270, the phrase *proclivas undas* can be rendered as "sloping waves", or as waves "tumbling down" into breakers: this sea is becoming dangerous, in spite of its surface loveliness. The adjective *vagi* (271),[22] portrays the Sun as a god "wandering," "uncertain." The natural order of the heavens is disrupted as the Sun leaves his fixed diurnal course. Even the coloring of the light playing on the swimming waves (275, *nantes*) is ominous. It gleams purple-red, a hue both reminiscent of Theseus' purple funereal sails (227, *carbasus obscurata...ferrugine*),[23] and a possible portent of a coming storm. After toying with human beings as inanimate waves tossed about in a perilous nature, the narrator casts this imaginary sea-scape aside. The rural *figurae* reappear, only to depart from the scene, as the Sun did, on "uncertain foot" (277, *ad se quisque vago passim pede discedebant*). The ambiguous phrase *ad se*, taken by all commentators to mean "to his own home,"[24] is insufficient to make the reader believe that the *Thessala pubes* ever find their own way back to their timeless abandoned rural *domus*.

By contrast, in lines 277-304 the narrator brings the reader back to Peleus' *regia domus* and the problem of the marriage. If the human guests are not allowed to mingle with the divine, even on such a unique occasion as this, how blissful is the marriage between the mortal Peleus and the immortal Thetis? That their yoking brings together a disparate pair, an unnatural alliance, becomes even more obvious when the reader examines the deities who grace the house with their presence.

Figura by *figura*, the mélange of divine wedding guests adds to the sinister, distorted aspect of the ceremony. The arrival of Chiron is not surprising in itself, since, by tradition, the centaur is destined to

become the tutor of Achilles, the issue of Peleus and Thetis. Instead of his traditional gift of an ash-spear,[25] however, Chiron comes (presumably from his home in Mt. Pelion) bearing "plaited garlands" (283, *plexos... corollis*). The substitution of a floral gift for a war-like gift seems strange. As the destined tutor of Achilles, a centaur wise and skilled according to legend, Chiron is inept. His blooming gifts are "indistinct," "unseparated," even "unimpressive" (283, *indistinctis*) because of their indiscriminate bunching. When the royal domus "breaks into a smile" (284, *risit*) at their scent, perhaps it is also "laughing at" the bearer, too.

The presence of Penios, an eponymous river-god, adds a touch of "burlesque"[26] to the humor of Chiron's behavior. It seems appropriate that a river deity should be the one bearing woodland gifts, trees which have come to their fullness of growth because of his life-giving streams. Instead of planting them, however, the god strews them "uprooted" (288, *radicitus*) around the *regia tecta*, an act which transforms the *domus* into a site of waste and death. Two of the trees in particular, the cypress and the poplar, bring out further nuances of the *domus* as a tomb, a setting for mourning. The poplar, though unnamed, is depicted as "the sister of fiery Phaethon" (290-291, *sorore/flammati...Phaethontis*). The reader who looks at this gift is made to grieve again for a mortal whose rashness in driving the chariot of the sun ended in his own destruction, as well as in the transformation (through unbearable sorrow) of his sisters.[27] Thus, amidst the festivities celebrating the union, there are disquieting signs of the mortality both of Peleus and his *domus* (e.g., withering trees). How is this a fit domain for an immortal bride?

With the advent of the final *figurae* (Prometheus, Jupiter, and Apollo), the reader moves from intimations of a divided royal *domus* to evidence that the divine *domus* is itself a House Divided. Prometheus is an unexpected guest, a *figura* completely unlike Chiron and Penios, and one whose *persona* is associated with a challenge to Jupiter's supremacy and with divine retribution. Surely his presence will make the *divum pater* (298) feel some discomfort, because this is the god who took away Jupiter's *amor* for Thetis.[28] Prometheus, too, comes bringing a strange gift -- the physical scars (295, *vestigia*) of his cousin's vengeance. His body still bears the marks of the chains that bolted the Titan to Mount Caucasus and the eagle that picked his liver day by day. This guest is also a trickster-god, whose test of Jupiter's knowledge destroyed the Golden Age of brotherhood and communication between man and god.[29]

The idea of division and estrangement continues in the guest-list. The expected guests, Jupiter and Hera, (298, *sancta cum coniuge natisque*), are etched in and then passed over. The narrator is more concerned with directing attention to *figurae* that are missing. He asserts that Apollo and his twin sister "disdained to celebrate the nuptials of Thetis' marriage" (301-302). The word "aspernata" (301) carries connotations of strong aversion, and thus dramatizes the rejection, at least by some of the gods, of a union between god and man. The absent Apollo, more than any of the divinities present, is the portent of the destruction inherent in this marriage-bond. He, after all, is one of the two destined slayers of Peleus' and Thetis' son Achilles (the other being Paris).[30] In addition, the god's role as protector of Achilles' future enemies, the Trojans, dooms the marriage of Peleus and Thetis to be ill-starred from

its inception.[31] The archer-god of the Trojan War is the culmination of a series of divine guests, who bring as "gifts" a future filled with darkness, discord among families and nations, and promises of vengeance and the slaughter of innocents.

FRAME THREE.

The third framing edge (303-383) begins with negativity. The narrator can not speak of the "nuptial pine-torches" (302, *taedas*) without enveloping them in the phrase *nec...voluit*. Rather than depict a traditional Roman wedding-banquet, or torch-light procession through streets, or even a processional leading a bride over the threshold of the marriage-chamber, the narrator discloses the presence of ominous deities seated somewhere at the edges of the festivities. In lines 305-322 the same *mira ars* that had earlier painted a youthful Ariadne on to the *vestis* now paints another incarnation of the feminine in the shape of the Parcae, whom Richardson describes as "cracked and pathetic old women dressed in ritual finery."[32] The narrator conceives of these goddesses as "sickly, shaking bodies" (305, *infirmo quatientes corpora motu*; cf. 307, *his corpus tremulum*); which are draped on all sides with a white vestis (307). His choice of *the word vestis*, instead *amictus* (cf. 266) or some such noun, is a further indication that the *picturae* to come may be just as tragic with respect to love and heroism as the *tableaux* on the Ariadne/Theseus *vestis* were.

The *vestis* of the Parcae is the first visual sign of their disturbing character. The white hue of the garment and its purple hem

pick up the colors not only of the overdone marriage-chamber of Peleus and Thetis (47-49), but also of the ash-fouled white head of Aegeus and of his son's funereal sails (227). Both colors, which are combined again in "rosy fillets on snow-white heads" (309, *roseae niveo...vertice vittae*), project the Parcae as another hybrid, a clash between sexual frigidity and passionate feeling/*furor*.[33] Strange guests for a wedding. If their clothing reduces reduces the erotic potential of the wedding, these *figurae*, even though goddesses, seem on the threshold of death. Added to the images of their physical infirmity are others describing the dessication of the females. The reader can see tiny bits of wool clinging to "parched little lips" (316, *laneaque aridulis haerebant morsa labellis*), and a single "tooth evening and snapping" the spun-dry thread (315, *decerpens aequabat semper opus dens*). This realistic detail, which shows the influence of Hellenistic pictorial art,[34] removes any glamour from the wedding scene. Rather than depict a youthful bride, the narrator focuses on goddesses who resemble crones worn out from a lifetime of toil working the distaff and wool.

Catullus' narrator is perhaps drawing upon another Hellenistic artistic medium (the poetic) when he identifies the spinning of the Parcae with their singing in accompaniment to the motion of the spindle and distaff.[35] Their musical strain not only is said to "tell the truth" (306, *veridicos*), but it is immediately transformed into the utterance of a "divine poem" (321-322, *divino fuderunt carmine fata/carmine*) and into a "truthful oracle" (326, *veridicum oraclum*). In effect, these Parcae/crones assume the mantle of ancient oral bards (*vates*), men whose songs of past heroic deeds commemorate the achievement of glorious family lines

and houses. As singers, however, the women refuse to look back to the past either for guidance or for inspiration. Instead, they fashion a hybrid oral poem. It is at once an *epithalamium* chanted in honor of Peleus and Thetis and an *aristeia* which prophesies the inglorious heroism of Achilles. Unlike every other vision in the text, this song is not introduced by impersonal verbs, such as *fertur, dicuntur, perhibent*. The narrator insists that "no age will accuse [these feminine singers] of *perfidia* (322): for the first time he stands behind the "truth" he creates.

The initial three stanzas (323-327; 328-333; 334-337) seem to adhere to the traditional motifs and rhetorical structure of a wedding song. The time is the "present," and the Parcae, in Roman fashion, hail the bridegroom. The Peleus who has been absent from sight since his metamorphosis into a *columen* (26) is addressed and elevated in rank: "O thou that exaltest thy rare glory by great deeds of valour" (323).[36] Like the description of the Thessalian royal *domus*, however, such praise of Peleus is over-wrought. Since the reader has been given no accounting of Peleus' past *virtutes*, how is his projection as "the means of defense for Emathia" (324, *tutamen*) credible? Is his role as protector a complement of his duties as husband? Furthermore, when he is hailed as "dearest to" Jupiter, child of Ops, the Goddess of Plenty (324), the reader recalls a Jupiter whose affection for Peleus was not generous. He merely yielded place to the mortal as bridegroom. This is the Peleus whom the Parcae now bid to hear the following refrain: "But do you, ye spindles, run on, drawing out as threads the destinies which are to come" (326).[37] Not even the Parcae, it seems, have the power to alter what has already "been

spoken" (321, *fata*) about this hybrid union. The "threads" of their song simply grant destiny a material form.

In the second stanza (326-333), the narrator gives a peculiar twist to "an indispensable element" of Roman marriage ceremony, namely the "*deductio* of the bride."[38] It is now the time of the rising of the evening star Hesperus (the planet Venus),[39] and the absent Thetis is portrayed as about to come and fulfill the "things desired (328, *optata maritis*) by every husband." On the surface, the suggestions of love-making (e.g., "smooth feminine arms" placed "under [Peleus'] strong masculine neck" and "the sleep that follows sexual fulfillment" (330-332)[40] are conventional motifs of an *epithalamium*. But Thetis is, one must remember, a *diva*, and yet here she is expected to be subservient and comply with the sexual duties required of any mere mortal bride: "a wife who will flood [her man's] heart with love that distracts him from other things" (italics mine).[41] Is this the grandeur of love that "she did not disdain" (20)?

The off-key elements of the *epithalamium* resonate in the third stanza (334-337), the first two lines of which begin with the negative images *nulla domus* (334), *nullus amor* (335). Suddenly, what binds all the framing edges together around the central canvas is manifest. The depiction of Peleus' royal house as "concealing such loves" (334, *tales contexit amores*) identifies the *domus* as deceitful mask with that of the *vestis* of Ariadne and Theseus as deceitful mask: the folds of that dark garment conceal the *pulvinar* (266, *complexa...velabat*). Both cover over stories (past and future) of love that fails and of heroes who are not what they seem. The Parcae, too, conceal, for a moment, where their song is leading. They begin by putting a rosy hue over the future. The

married love of Peleus and Thetis is elevated to a Roman *foedus* ("a relationship of *amicitia* between equals).[42] *Foedus* also suggests the sacred obligation upon both partners of living in accordance with *pietas* and *fides*.[43] In addition, the strong familial bonds of the couple are projected to produce a *concordia* (336). And yet, although "such an alliance" (335, *tali...foedere*) of the disparate pair promises to be made valid and permanent, there is still a presentiment of evil.

Achilles is that evil incarnate. Images of his *aristeia* as a "killer-hero"[44] fill the next five stanzas of the song of the Parcae (338-371): "strange music for a wedding."[45] Like an Athena, the demi-god Achilles springs into being (in lines 338-342) fully grown, a warrior *figura*. As parents, therefore, Peleus and Thetis are denied any of the pleasure that glimpses of Achilles' childhood and their nurturing of him might have provided. The Achilles of this song may be fearless (338, *expers terroris*), indomitable (339), and fleet (340-341), but his parents do not see the lineaments of a son's face or hear any of his words. He is merely a "back" (339, *tergo*) and a "brave breast" (339, *forti pectore*). Even his genealogy as sole heir of Peleus is superseded by his association, through the convoluted rhetoric of line 344-346, with another heir belonging to another royal *domus*, namely, Agamemnon. This man is proclaimed "third heir of perjured Pelops" (346, *periuri Pelopis...tertius heres*).[46] The essence of Achilles as *heros* is thus cloaked with the legendary brutality of the House of Atreus, a royal *domus* where men abuse divine trust, parents serve children's flesh, fathers and sons sacrifice kin, and warriors make Earth run red with blood.

The *picturae* that follow demonstrate what the Parcae mean when they

link Achilles' "extraordinary *virtutes* and renowned deeds" (348, *egregias virtutes claraque facta*) with such a *domus*. Their catalogue of exploits (349-370) begins in line 349 with images of "mothers," "sons," and "a funeral." Because the song is a prophecy offered to one particular mother, the singular noun *funus* has a special resonance. The reader thinks that Achilles' death after a glorious career is being foreshadowed. The career recorded, however, is that of a hero who brings terror and grief to everything he touches. The image of the mourning mothers properly describes the Trojan mothers. Achilles is a *monstrum*, a portent of doom, the reason that mothers "will bruise" (351, *variabunt*) their "withered" (351, *putridaque*) breasts in anguish for the sons he has slaughtered.[47] The effect of the image of dried-up breasts is to draw immortal Thetis into the domain of mortal women, and into the death her role as *mater* is destined to bring.

The focus upon images of *mater* continues in lines 353-361. The Parcae sing of the effects of Achilles' battle-rampage upon Mother Earth. As *mater*, Thetis must now endure her heroic son being transformed, through a simile, into a reaper toiling in the fields (353, *messor*). But her son's labor brings no fruit. Instead of working in the fields and harvesting ears of corn, grown to their fullness as sources of food for man (354, *flaventia...arva*); Achilles stands on the plain and cuts down rows of Trojan bodies to feed his warrior's lust. His desecration of the goods of Earth is matched by his fouling of one of her waters, the waves of the Scamander (357 ff.). The "nameless heap"[48] of Trojan dead not only restricts the flow of the Scamander to the Hellespont, but the life-blood of human beings "warms" (360, *tepefaciet*), and almost replaces, the life-

giving waters of nature. As sea-nymph, therefore, a woman whose "Being" is the water, Thetis must reckon with the vision of a son capable of violating even her own *domus*.

The Parcae bring their catalogue to an end with perhaps the most complicated image of the death inherent in the union of Peleus and Thetis. Two details, the *bustum* (363, barrow) and the *sepulcra* (368, tomb), confront a divine *mater* with cold reality: her killer-son's inability to escape death himself.[49] Her eye is made to "climb up [Achilles'] tomb -- which instead of being polished or round becomes a heap of blood-red carnage."[50] Raised on the Hellespont, this barrow becomes Achilles' eternal *domus*, the material sign of what separates mother and son.

The song of prophecy should have ended here, but the Parcae hymn an Achilles become killer even in death. Their hymn is, in effect, a dirge for Hecuba's lost daughter, Polyxena, "unwilling bride" of dead Achilles. Now the barrow becomes an altar on which a perverted marriage rite is performed in front of another wedding-couple, Achilles' parents. The Achilles who has doomed *matres* to bereavement for sons killed by his hand still has the power, even from the grave, to increase the brutality of his heroism.[51] Polyxena is represented as, simultaneously, booty (362, *praeda*), bride, sacrificial animal, and headless body. The mutilation of the female body (370, *truncum...corpore*) by the double-axe, an instrument of sacred ritual (369, *ancipiti...ferro*), is an image even more disturbing than the indiscriminate cutting down of the corn/Trojan warriors by the living Achilles' axe (355, *infesto...ferro*). The careful detailing of the hymn of the Parcae presents the reader with a Polyxena who goes through the horror of every step of the ritual, a woman conscious of what

is befalling her. First, she marks her submission to her "bridegroom" by lowering herself on to this altar/tomb with bended knee; then she hurls her headless corpse forward in the throes of joining with him in death.

In line 372 the abrupt transition between a vision of decapitation and an exhortation to the bridal pair to consummate their marriage shocks the reader.[52] The Parcae superimpose the prospects of a living bride upon the reality of a dead bride, thereby increasing the dark and the sinister in the present nuptial celebration. The disparate pair are ordered to join in an act of love-making (372, *optatos animi...amores*). Once again, the *diva* Thetis is reminded, as any mortal woman would be, of her prescribed duties as *nupta*. She is urged to surrender herself (374, *dedatur*) to the terms of her "contract" (373, *foedere*) with a mortal husband. But in the stock Roman banter teasing this bride on her lost virginity, there are disquieting echoes of the earlier discordant song. Through the collocation and build-up of the images *anxia nec mater*, *maesta puellae* (379), *secubitu caros*, and *mittet sperare domus* (380), the Parcae give Thetis fragmentary images of the only possibilities in being woman in the world she now inhabits. There flash before her eyes now "a distraught mother," now "a saddened woman," now a woman "separated from her dear ones," now a woman "stripped of the hope of descendants" (380, *nepotes*). Strange music for a wedding.

As the reader leaves this framing edge, he is saddened and perplexed. What is the "truth?" Has the song of the Parcae been an *epithalamium* in honor of a unique occasion, or is it, rather, a dirge mourning losses beyond the ken of even the Parcae? For, the *figura* of their Thetis is not different from any of the creatures, male or female,

created earlier by the narrator. Thetis' *error* in leaving her natural *domus*, her secure realm, is only a variation on the themes of self-separation, destruction, and loss running throughout all three framing edges.

The genesis of these themes is the pine-daughters' *error* in swimming away from their father. This unexplained archetypical act opens the poem. Thereafter the reader is plunged into a series of abbreviated, rapidly-shifting *picturae*, which defy all conventional norms of epic literary tradition: logical time-sequence, symbolic geographical territories, clearly defined central characters, and thematic unity, scene-to-scene. Instead, the reader of *Carmen 64* meets a group of "select heroes," whose stature as the Argonauts is never acknowledged. For a single line he follows this group on their quest for a fleece, only to see them transformed into *robora*/youth, and, then, fir-palms -- and then they simply disappear from sight, never to return.

The reader encounters a second archetypical *error*. The human wedding guests who flock to Peleus' *regia domus* do so at the price of abandoning their pride-of-place in the rural *domus*. Nature begins to die, an act which sets the stage not only for the death-bringing hero Achilles in the song of the Parcae, but also for the failed divine *domus* of the fourth framing edge.

NOTES

1. The title of this chapter is R. Lattimore's translation of *Eumenides, 50, in* Aeschylus I. *Oresteia* (Chicago: University Press, 1953), p. 136. The epigraphs are taken from T. Johnson's edition of the poetry of Emily Dickinson.

2. *Collected Sonnets of Edna St. Vincent Millay* (New York: Washington Square Press Inc., 1960), p. XIX.

3. Merrill, p. 130, *ad loc.*, makes the point about instability. He notes that the adjective is "not an otiose epithet." It indicates water unsuited "to support a heavy body." Professor E. D. Blodgett has called my attention to the possibility of a pun linking the adjective *liquidus* to the *liq-* perfect root in the verbs *linquo* and *relinquo*. This pun would associate the waters with the theme of leave-taking which dominates the epyllion (e. g., 35, 59, 123, 133, 162, 180, etc. Leo C. Curran, "Catullus 64 and the Heroic Age," *YCS* 21 (1969), p. 185, states:

> *Linquere* and *relinquere* are used with particular frequency in the Ariadne story and in such a way that they lose their colorlessness and become loaded words.

4. In Vergil's *Aeneid* IV. 22, Dido confesses that Aeneas is the only man who has "turned her away from" her adoration of her dead husband, Sychaeus:

> *solus hic inflexit sensus animumque labantem*
> *impulit. adgnosco veteris vestigia flammae.*

5. Cf. Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica* I. 18 ff.

6. Ellis, p. 283, *ad loc.*

7. I have chosen to read line 11 according to the text of D. F. S. Thomson, *Catullus. A Critical Edition* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1978), i.e., *prima* instead of *proram*.

8. Ellis, p. 285, *ad loc.*

9. Forsyth, p. 351, *ad loc.* Ellis, p. 285, notes the meaning of *proscindere* as "generally used of the first ploughing which breaks up a virgin soil...."

10. This point is also briefly alluded to by Curran, p. 188.

11. In line 27 the phrase *suos...concessit amores* hints at the traditional story (cf. Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*) that Thetis was, in fact, Jupiter's own "love-object," one that he had to give up because of a prophecy warning against the marriage.

12. If Catullus were following Alexandrian tradition, he might have been expected to preface the wedding story of Peleus and Thetis with an invocation to Erato, the Muse of love and of love poetry. Apollonius Rhodius, for example, begins the narrative on Medea and Jason (Book 3) with such an appeal for inspiration.

13. Arkins, p. 134, uses each of the quoted words sometimes singly, sometimes in pairs, throughout this page.

14. Merill, p. 134, notes that the common form of the legend made Mt. Pelion the place of the wedding, and Chiron the host.

15. G. Giangrande, "Catullus 64.35," *LCM* 1 (1976), p. 111, argues for keeping the reading *Scyros* (instead of *Cieros*) because Catullus' "inaccuracy" about Thessaly's geography is less important than the aura he creates of "olden times." Hereafter this article is cited as Giangrande, "Catullus 64.35."

16. J. C. Bramble, "Structure and Ambiguity in Catullus LXIV," *PCPS* 16 (1970), p. 39.

17. *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), p. 748, outlines two major uses for the *pulvinar*: "(1) a couch, such as was used for the images or symbols of gods at a *lectisternium*;...(2) a platform on which such objects were placed, either to be adored at a *supplicatio*, or for other ritual purposes...." See also Jerome Carcopino, *Daily Life In Ancient Rome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940, reprint 1979), p. 209, who traces the use of the *pulvinar* in later Roman times in sacred corteges in the simultaneous honor of past emperors and their living representative.

18. Roman disapproval of *luxuria* is best summed up by Marcus Cato in the Preface of his treatise *De Agri Cultura* I.5-7:

> *Instrumenti ne magni siet, loco bono siet. Videto, quam minimi/ instrumenti sumptuosusque ager ne siet. Scito/ idem agrum quod hominem, quamvis quaestuosus siet, si sumptuosus erit, relinqui non multum.*

See also Cicero, *In Catilinam* II, v. 9-11; *De Oratore* II, 171.

19. Bramble, p. 38, says:

> Catullus has only given us the negative aspect of a return to the Golden Age: he cheats the reader of the expected description of Nature's automatic beneficence towards man. Labor and agriculture have ceased, but the innocent earth does not submit to the Golden Age formula by producing crops of her own volition.

20. O'Connell, p. 749.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 752.

22. *Vagus* is a favorite of Catullus. Of the thirteen appearances of the adjective in the *corpus*, only three (cc. 46, 61, 65) occur outside of cc. 63 and 64. As Ellis was first to point out, p. 262, n. 4, *vagus* denotes states of mental confusion, emotional bewilderment, and erratic movement of bodies, animate or inanimate. Thus the use of *vagus* in reference to the Sun suggests the "madness" of the god, his condition of inner turmoil.

23. O'Connell, p. 752, is the first to develop the links between the coloring of the waves and Theseus' sails.

24. Cf. Forsyth, *The Poems*, *ad loc*.

25. Bramble, p. 29. Cf. also Homer, *Iliad* 16, 144.

26. Kinsey, p. 923. In his discussion of the passage, however, he sees something that this reader of the poem does not. For, Kinsey asserts that, "Penios *plants* [the trees] around the palace..." (italics mine).

27. Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 2. 1-366.

28. This story is as old as Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*. Only Prometheus knew that Thetis was the deity prophesied to bear to Zeus a son who would overthrow him. Prometheus taunts Zeus with this secret, and is finally released from bondage when he tells it. See also Hygienus, *Astr*. 2. 15.

29. For the earliest account of the relations between man and god in the Golden Age, see Hesiod's *Works and Days*, 109-126. The most telling dramatization of the disruption caused to the divine realm by Prometheus is found in Hesiod's *Theogony*, 507-616.

30. Cf. *Iliad* 22, 359-360.

31. The *doctus lector* will know, of course, the ancient legends about the golden apple, the source of strife among three female deities at the wedding, the role of Trojan Paris as judge, and the much later sacrifice of Iphigenia to appease Artemis for her loss of Troy. Curran, p. 186, calls attention to Homer, *Iliad* 24. 63 and Pindar, *Nemean* 5. 21 ff., both of which record Apollo as present at the wedding.

32. Richardson, p. 51.

33. I am indebted to C. C. Rohrer, "Red and White in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: The Mulberry Tree in the Tale of Pyramus and Thisbe," *Ramus* 9, pp. 79-80, for her work on colors in Latin poetry. See also B. H. Fowler, *The Hellenistic Aesthetic* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), p. 17 ff.

34. Fowler, p. 99 ff., traces what is almost a genre of depicting the aged so as to draw out the pathos of the human body as it withers away.

35. *AP* 726:

> Old Platthis often repelled from her evening and morning sleep, keeping poverty away, and near the door of gray old age used to sing a tune to her spindle and familiar distaff. Still by the loom until the dawn she revolved in company with the Graces that long task of Pallas, or, a loveable figure, smoothed with her wrinkled hand on her wrinkled knee the thread sufficient for the loom. Aged eighty years comely Platthis who wove so well set eyes on the lake of Acheron.

36. This is Ellis' translation, p. 334, *ad loc.*

37. Ellis, *ibid.*

38. Eduard Fraenkel, "*Vesper Adest* (Catullus LXII) *JRS* 45 (1955), p. 7. For a study of the conventions of Roman marriage, see Gordon Williams, "Some Aspects of Roman Marriage Ceremonies and Ideals, *JRS* 48 (1958), pp. 16-29.

39. D. A. Kidd, "Hesperus and Catullus LXII," *Latomus* 33 (1974), pp. 22-23, discusses the meaning of Hesperus:

> Seen in the afterglow of the sunset, it presents what most observers would consider an impressive and beautiful sight. It became therefore a byword for beauty and, inasmuch as it outshines all other stars, a byword for pre-eminent beauty.... In art [Hesperus] appears as a young man, with flowing hair, carrying a torch, and riding a horse.

40. Arkins, p. 136.

41. *Ibid.*

42. Ross, p. 85.

43. On this concept, see P. McGushin, "Catullus' *Sanctae Foedus Amicitiae*," *CP* 62 (1967), pp. 85-86, and R. H. Henry, "*Pietas* and *Fides* in Catullus," *Hermathena* 75 (1950), pp. 65-67.

44. Daniels, "'The Song of the Fates' in Catullus 64: Epithalamium or Dirge?," *CJ* 68 (1972), p. 101. Hereafter this article is cited as Daniels, "Song."

45. *Ibid.*

46. Cf. Pindar, *Olympian* 1.

47. Cf. Horace, *Odes* I. 1, 24-25: *...bellaque matribus/ detestata.* The source of Catullus' inspiration for the *matres* and their *putrida pectora* is, of course, Homer, *Iliad* 22, 77ff.

48. Putnam, p. 253.

49. Kinsey, p. 926, says:

> Thetis tried to secure immortality for her children [*sic*] and Pindar tells us that the death of Achilles was the great misfortune of Peleus' life.

50. Putnam, p. 254.

51. Daniels, p. 101. Cf. the Prologue of Euripides' *Hecuba*.

52. Quinn, *The Poems, ad loc.*, observes: "*...quare* seems almost ostentatiously to ignore the horror of what has just been prophesied.

Is it a love poem? Did he sing of war?
Is it an intrigue to run subtly out,
Born of a jongleur's tongue, freely to pass
Up and about and in and out the land,
Mark him a craftsman and a strategist?
.....
.....
Oh, there is precedent, legal tradition,
To sing one thing when your song means another...

Ezra Pound, "Near Perigord"

CHAPTER FOUR

"THE DIRE DIMENSION OF A FINAL THING"

These houses, these difficult objects, dilapidate
Appearances of what appearances,
Words, lines, not meanings, not communications

Wallace Stevens, "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven"

But now a habit of the truth had formed
To protect him in a privacy, in which

The scholar, captious, told him what he could
Of there, where the truth was not the respect of one,
But always of many things. He had not to be told

Of the incredible subjects of poetry
He was willing they should remain incredible
Because the incredible, also, had its truth...

Wallace Stevens, "Someone Puts a Pineapple Together"[1]

Catullus' narrator has much in common with Stevens' captious scholar. At the end of the third framing edge, the reader is ensnared to imagine that the "truth" consists of a choice among a narrow field of answers. Is *Carmen* 64 a wedding poem, or a heroic epic, or a didactic epic (that is, a narration of "the descent of man")?[2] But even as he questions these possibilities, he already knows that a "habit of truth" has formed about how to look upon what he sees. Each successive part reveals something hitherto unknown about the known, and each succesive part contains "dilapidate appearances -- of what appearances? Thus, when the reader looks at the fourth framing edge (383-408) and hears of the mingling of gods and men, perplexed, he begins to meditate on "the

incredible subjects of poetry."

The fourth frame opens up a vast chasm between the *domus* of Peleus and Thetis and another "strange, isolated little family."[3] The members of this family are introduced collectively as "those who cherish the heavens" (386, the *caelicolae*). The impulse to make an easy identification between these *figurae* and the divinities frequenting the wedding-feast quickly fades, however. The temporal adverb *ante* (384,"in former times") removes the reader to another dimension of space and time. He is "somewhere." But where? in relationship to the pine-daughters, the quest of Theseus, the ribald banter of the wedding-feast? Furthermore, even though a second temporal adverb, *postquam* (397, "afterwards") slips in, it soon becomes clear that "time" is essentially meaningless. In this incredible poetry, time does not pass. And yet the narrator pretends to catalogue an array of religious events which ought to place the reader in "time." Such playfulness with verbal ambiguities once again draws attention back to the narrator: what kind of *figura* is he as artist?

Within the space of a single line-end (383, *Parcae*/384, *praesentes*), the narrator cuts off the sound of the competing voices of the Parcae in song. The *picturae* he now creates have been criticized by Quinn as forming a "clumsy moral statement"[4] about human depravity. But the narrator's dramatic reassertion of first-hand control (cf. 116-117, *quid ego...digressus/commemorem*) is neither clumsy in technique nor moralistic in intention. The same creator who has earlier challenged the reader's belief in the stability of nature and of man (heroic or rural) now strips the last illusion from the reader's eyes, namely that there is anything sacred even in the deities his culture honors. It would seem, to

paraphrase Dickinson, that Catullus' poet-narrator has lost faith in the entirety of the "estate" which he inherited along with life -- his artistic traditions together with the ancient truths and rituals informing his very sense of humanity. And the art with which this narrator transmits such "unbelief"[5] to the reader transforms the fourth framing edge into a powerful look back on the poem as a whole. It serves as a kind of *epitaphium* to "Being's beggary."

The framing edge (384-408) can be broken into what appear, at first, to be *picturae* of two contrasting times: the Good Life (*ante*) and the Bad Life (*postquam*). The common link between the two dimensions is that the *caelicolae* dominate. Mortals exist only in their relationship to these higher powers. The essential difference between the two dimensions can be summarized as the presence, as opposed to the absence, of the gods. The narrator asserts that when the *caelicolae* were present, there was a generation of heroes (385-386, *domos...heroum*), "Stronger and freer, a little better off."[6]

But how do the gods "manifest themselves" (385, *sése...ostendere*) as present? The narrator claims that "mortal assemblies" (385, *mortali...coetu*) have experienced the numinous presence of the *caelicolae*. The reader expects some evidence to support such a claim. What he receives, however, is a haphazard collection of clichés on ancient religious practice. Furthermore, there is no logical relationship between one divine manifestation (i.e., *coetus*) and another. Jupiter, for example, is not represented with any of the elegance due to the *pater divum* (387). He is merely a god who returns on a yearly basis to watch "the falling of bulls"(388): where does this sacred event take place?

Where are the people to pay honor to his divine presence? The chain of *saepe* (387), *saepe* (390), *cum* (392), and *saepe* (394) sets up a puzzling relationship among what really are quite separate and distinct cults in honor of Jupiter, Liber, Apollo (at Delphi?),[7] and the war-gods. This same vagueness pertains to the description of the mortals said to "rejoice" (393, *laeti*) at Delphi. These *figurae* have no individuality beyond the name of their city. Like the mortal wedding-guests, they remain forever faceless and nameless. Just as the mortals in these sacred rituals remain amorphous, so, too, does the "armed crowd" of men (396, *armatas...catervas*) driven into "the death-bringing contest of war" (394, *in letifero belli certamine*). The ominous nuances of the sacred in the divine are now set by the gods they honor.

The reader who looks at the Good Life with eyes that have seen the rest of the poem, can not ignore the dire dimension in the vision of the slaughtered bulls in line 389. First, the occasion is not accompanied by any details of the feasting, conviviality, and joy traditionally associated with the gift of animal sacrifice. Jupiter and a hundred dead bulls are the center, not mankind. Second, as Forsyth notes, the verb *procumbere* (389) recalls *succumbens* (369),[8] and the "bloodless body of a young girl [Polyxena] gratuitously slain"[9] as animal sacrifice. The association between human beings as either victims or agents of sacrifice grows stronger with the *pictura* of the people of Delphi "vying with one another madly" (392, *certatim...ruentes*) about countless altars. These sacred places are said to be "smoking," or perhaps "reeking" (392, *fumantibus*) with the stench of heaped carcases. But such a profusion of apparently proper sacrifices can not erase the memory of the one perverted

sacrifice. The decapitated body of Polyxena lying over the barrow of Achilles stains the sacred in sacrifice.

What is missing from all of the imagery of the Good Life is any proof of a real *coetus*, a real communication between gods and men. The reader never sees Liber, for example, infusing the pleasures of his ecstasy into the spirits of mankind. The god is too busy "driving on" (391, *egit*) his band of Thyads. Is his "bride" Ariadne to be imagined among their frenzied troop? Even the gods Mars, Athena, and the *Rammusia virgo* (Nemesis? Diana?) are "presences" (396, *praesens*) among mankind simply in their capacity as remote marshals of battle. For them, death is a game; but for their mortal pawns it is final, with everything to lose. If even the conventional idea of deities as numinous allies or patrons of heroes can be undermined, how, in retrospect, can the reader believe in the narrator's abrupt assertion that the homes of the heroes in this divine *domus* are "virtuous" (384, *domos...castas*)?

As the narrator moves into an account of the so-called Bad Life, he predicates its "Being" on a *iustitia* (398) which mortals have somehow forsaken. But having seen the emptiness of the vague religiosity of the Good Life, the reader is even more frustrated with the empty abstraction "*iustitia*." The "justice" of the Good Life has simply meant bands of mortals seen rushing about in mindless compliance with divine ordinances. These creatures are passively "good" as they carry out, in rote repetition, sacred rituals wherein they derive no meaningful *coetus* with their deities. As Thomson says in another context, theirs is "a *domus* leaving a void in the heart."[10]

Nevertheless, the catalogue of the activities pursued by the

Unblessed is just as vague, just as meaningless and mindless as the religious practices of the Blessed. There are no faces, nor any names attached to those who are said to engage in fratricide, in acts of unnatural lust, and in forgetfulness of their duties to the dear dead (400-403). The narrator's vagueness about such shocking realities removes the horror from the impious. The shallow family ties between gods and men in the Good Life are mirrored in reverse by the shallow family ties between men and women in the Bad Life. Strange music.

When the narrator inscribes at the bottom of his poem's *epitaphium* the noun phrase *omnia fanda nefanda malo permixta furore* (405), he mocks the reader. These words say plainly that no matter what the reader thinks the painting might "say" (*fanda*), these *picturae* are, at best, elliptical, only glimpses of things which are "unspeakable" (*nefanda*). The source of the narrator's inspiration is not, as the reader might have supposed, the pleasure of crafting a novel art: a painting in words. For such a painting implies a poet's confidence that he can transform "clods of color"[11] into clods of words capable of being scrutinized as a whole and, as Horace later says about the good painting, "in full light."[12] In *Carmen* 64, Catullus' narrator has fashioned a savage art, a thing fragmented. Its framing edges and central canvas speak of a void in its creator's heart. Such craftsmanship springs not from pleasure, but from something he connects with *malo...furore* (405). The adjective *malo* ("wicked" or "injurious") transforms *furor* from a conventional connotation of an artist's "beneficial" *mania* or divine inspiration into the narrator's personal Muse: a potentially self-injurious anger and rage. This Muse has left him impotent, unable to say, or to un-say, all the

incredible truths of his poetry (*omnia fanda nefanda*). The effect of such *furor* is to leave the reader in the same state of anger and rage as he struggles with visions of "no light" (407-408, *nec.../lumine claro*), separation and abandonment, and failure looming in the poem's final words. However often this reader looks back at *Carmen* 64, he will feel the pain underlying all the narrator's dark visions, and he will hear, as it were, a voice saying:

> That's it. The lover writes, the believer hears,
> The poet mumbles and the painter sees,
> Each one, his fated eccentricity,
> As a part, but part, but tenacious particle,
> Of the skeleton of the ether, the total
> Of letters, prophecies, perceptions, clods
> Of color, the giant of nothingness, each one
> And the giant ever changing, living in change.
>
> Wallace Stevens, "A Primitive Like an Orb"

NOTES

1. *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1967). The title of this chapter is a line quoted from Theodore Roethke's "The Tree, The Bird," in *The Far Field* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964).

2. Forsyth, "Catullus 64: The Descent of Man," *Antichthon* 9 (1975), pp. 41-51, hereafter cited as Forsyth, "Descent." She says that:

> The basic theme of poem 64 can be put into two words: *e vertice*. The human creature, having been blessed with a high state at birth, has fallen to a much lower level of existence. Like the ship Argo, mankind has lost sight of its lofty origin (p. 51).

3. This line is from Amy Lowell's "The Sisters," in *The Complete Poetical Works* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1955).

4. Quinn, *Interpretation*, p. 263.

5. I am using a term which Ezra Pound highlights in his translation, "Ask not Ungainly," of Horace's ode to Leuconoe (Odes I.11). The last two lines are as follows:

> We talk. Time runs in envy of us,
> Holding our day more firm in unbelief.

6. This is a line from Wallace Stevens' "The Good Man has no Shape."

7. It is difficult to give a precise reference to the noun *divum* in line 393. Is it Bacchus or Apollo? Merrill, *ad loc.*, says that Delphi was connected with the worship of both gods.

8. Forsyth, "Descent," p.44.

9. O'Connell, p. 754.

10. D. F. S. Thomson, "Aspects of Unity in Catullus 64," *CJ* 57 (1961), p. 56.

11. W. Stevens, "A Primitive like an Orb."

12. Horace, *De Arte Poetica*, 363: *haec amat obscuram volet haec sub luce videri.*

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